

SCARLET Street

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PHANTOMS of the OPERA

Virginia Mayo

The NIGHT STALKER

Display in Film Section

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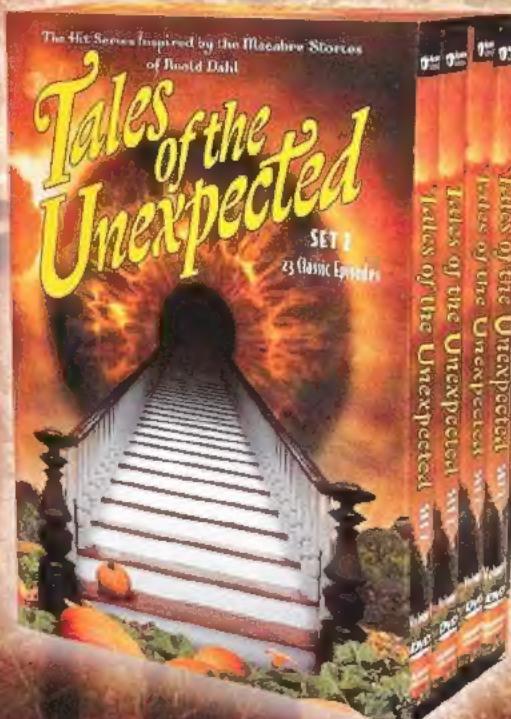
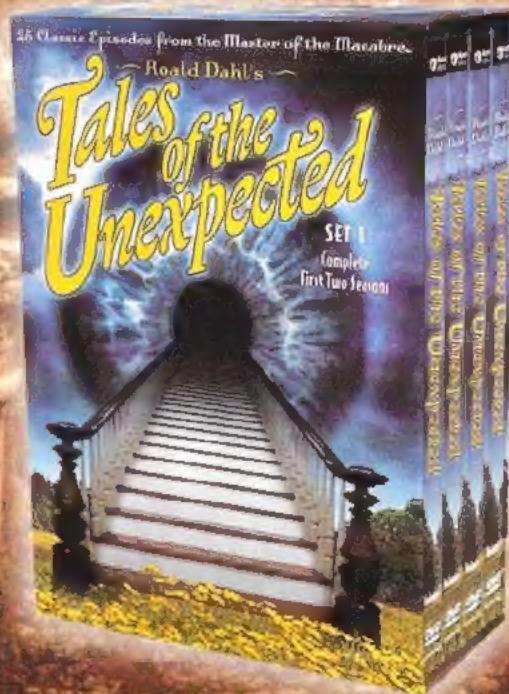
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Aboyd.com, Forrest J Ackerman, Mary Amorosi, Anchor Bay Entertainment, A&E Home Video, Bender Helper Impact, Ted A. Bohus, Kevin Clement, E.I. Independent Cinema, First Run Features, Grey MediaCom, Harriet Harvey, King on Video, Alvin H. Marill, McFarland & Co., Mechanicsburg Mystery Bookshop, MGM Home Entertainment, Joe Moe, MPI Home Video, Ann Palladino, Toni Palladino, 20th Century Fox, Paramount Pictures, Ben Pavlovic, Redfield Arts, Parker Riggs, Sinister Cinema, Something Weird, Stephen Sally, Synergy Entertainment, Universal Pictures, Philomena Valley, VCI Home Video, James Warren, Zacherley



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Printed in the U.S.A. Scarlet Street ® (ISSN 10588612)
is published for \$42 per year (\$8.95 for a single issue)
by Scarlet Street, Inc., 247 Boulevard, Glen Rock,
New Jersey 07452. Periodical postage paid at Ridgewood,
New Jersey and additional offices. POSTMASTER: Address
changes to Scarlet Street, P.O. Box 604, Glen Rock, NJ 07452.
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COVER: Lon Chaney as THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA (1925)

Scarlet Letters

I'm enjoying *Scarlet Street* #52! In Richard Valley's excellent interview with Patricia Morison, I was pleased to see that she enjoyed working on *SONG OF THE THIN MAN*, the only *film noir* in the *THIN MAN* series and, in my opinion, an underrated movie. She's terrific in it. (She's such an interesting conversationalist that I'm not surprised Ye Reditor didn't notice when he said "chipmunks" instead of "chimpanzees"—enjoyed the FRANKLY SCARLET column, too!)

Sorry my cable subscription doesn't include the Hallmark Channel, after reading Terry Pace's article about the new *FRANKENSTEIN*. I hope that version comes out on DVD.

After keeping the first edition of David Skal's original *Hollywood Gothic* where I can reach it easily for more than a decade now, I'm looking forward to the installment in the next *Scarlet Street*, and to buying the new edition of the book. The article on the various manifestations of Van Helsing, by Farnham Scott and Ye Reditor, makes a nice pairing with the Skal article. I like *VAMPIRE IN VENICE* better than they do, although I agree that it's a flawed movie. The musical score by Luigi Ceccarelli and the location shots in Venice give this movie a haunting atmosphere that I think complements Klaus Kinski's performance. For me, his advancing decrepitude contributed to the creepiness of the vampire character. *VENICE* moves too slowly, and Plummer and Pleasance phone it in, but I blame some of the flaws on what seems to me to be an overly literal translation into English of the screenplay, from the Italian of Leandro Lucchetti and director Augusto Caminito, in the one video version that's been available in the States. Literal translation from Italian is too likely to give the impression of a verissimo opera singer trying to perform the lead in a Shakespeare play while drunk. Anyhow, fine issue!

Lelia Loban
Falls Church, VA

Thanks for the editions of *Scarlet Street*! They arrived yesterday. I noted the article on Fu Manchu in SS #24. Henry Brandon, who played the lead in *DRUMS OF FU MANCHU*, was a friend of mine. We did a play together, *THE LADY'S NOT FOR BURNING*. That play started my career and I got my guild cards. That is where I met Maurice Seiderman, the makeup man on *CITIZEN KANE*. He'd done Henry's makeup for Fu Manchu, and Henry asked him to come do the makeup for the play's cast. (I was made up to look like a raccoon.) They asked for someone to help Maurice and I volunteered; it began a long friendship. I helped him out over the years with various projects. His makeup collection went to the Museum of the Moving Im-

age in Astoria. I had some prosthetics that Maurice had made when I played an Asian, so I sent them to the Museum as well. (Actually, they were from a Broadway production of *RASHOMON*, but they fit me.) What an interesting man! I even introduced him to his second wife.

I remember Henry saying that, when he went for the interview for Fu Manchu, someone told him that he didn't have the right look and would never get the part. Henry went to Maurice, and Maurice made him up as the character. Then Henry went on the interview in makeup. Of course, by the time he had finished, Maurice had gone home and Henry couldn't get the makeup off. Had to call Maurice to come back.

Jack Palance
West Hollywood, CA

*It's always a pleasure to hear from Jack, who starred with Darren McGavin and Simon Oakland on the TV classic *KOLCHAK: THE NIGHT STALKER*. (See page 68 for Kolchak news.) This year, Jack will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of his participation in *REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE*, and recently took part in a cast reunion for the upcoming DVD release.*

I've finally read the new issue (*Scarlet Street* #52) and it's great. Lovely of Patricia Morison to give a little Vincent Price anecdote in her interview and reveal a softer side of Lon Chaney Jr. And Richard Valley's reviews of the latest Monster Legacy DVD collections were



extremely insightful. The additional *Hollywood Gothic* material by David J. Skal was fascinating.

Earl Roesel
Newport, KY

Well, you boys continue to outdo yourselves. In fact, I'd go so far as to say you've ushered in a new era in magazine publishing. Yes, you've ushered in a new era in magazine publishing with your special non-limited, non-signature edition of *Scarlet Street* #52. Loved Rick McKay's reminiscence of Miss Fay Wray, and the interview with "Kiss Me Kate" herself, Patricia Morison. As always, the DVD reviews are informative and fun, and I was intrigued by your rave review of the book *Writer's Block*—I may have to pick up a copy. But the one thing I'd like to know is when did you decide to shorten the title of your non-limited, non-signature new era in magazine publishing magazine to *Scarlet Str*? What was Mr. Christopher Lee thinking with his great big Dracula head blocking out "eet"? By the way, I hear that Issue #53 is going to usher in a new era in magazine publishing. Is this true?

Loved seeing you boys here in Los Angeles, California, USA, at Mr. Forrest J Ackerman's 88th birthday bash. When I was a wee sprig of a twig of a tad of a lad of a youth, I lived a mere two blocks from the first Ackermansion on Sherbourne Drive, and on several occasions was invited in to check out the wonderful items therein. Keep up the excellently excellent work.

Bruce Kimmel
Studio City, CA

Thanx, Bruce! You've ushered in a new era of non-limited, non-signature *Scarlet Letter* writing. Your *Scarlet Letter* will be limited to 500 copies and we'll probably still be trying to sell them a year from now.

Scarlet Street #52 is my kind of issue! Enough Dracula-related articles (including pieces by Richard Valley, Farnham Scott, and Ken Hanke, and that juicy bit from the *Hollywood Gothic* revision by David Skal) to "make my eyes bug out, sugar," as Tennessee Williams wrote in the first draft of *BRIDES OF DRACULA*. I have to be honest; I don't really get hard nipples over the Creature from the Black Lagoon. There—I've said it. Having just seen Patricia Morison

WANTED! MORE FEMMES FATALE LIKE...



Patricia Morison

Continued on page 10



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Produced by Bruce Kimmel*Executive Producers:Richard Valley & Tom Amorosi*Cover Art by Frank Dietz

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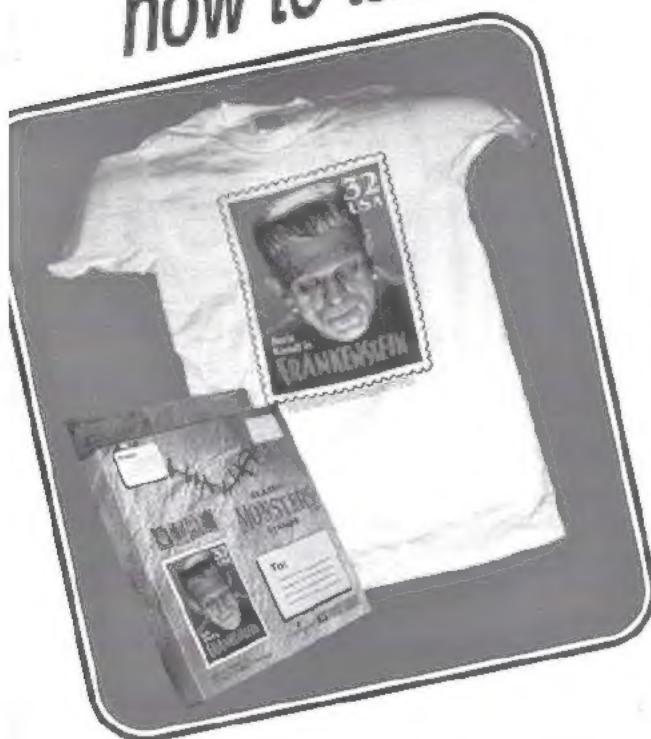
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—Forrest J Ackerman

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—James Warren



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great back issues!

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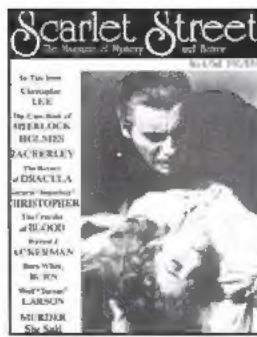
#1 (Reprint): Two covers (including the original), plus History of Scarlet Street and the original text, including THE FLASH, PERRY MASON, DARK SHADOWS, PSYCHO IV, SUPERBOY, POIROT, FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND, THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES, and more!



#2 HORRORS OF THE BLACK MUSEUM, DC Comics Gallery of Villains, Horror Italian Style, ATLANTIS IS THE LOST CONTINENT, FLASH, SUPERBOY, PERRY MASON, THE GOLDEN YEARS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES, DARK SHADOWS, Deardar Langtree, and more!



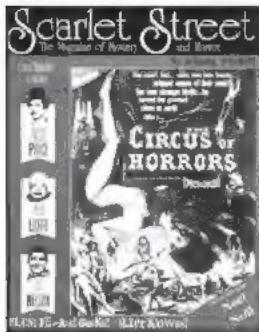
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#6: CIRCUS OF HORRORS, Noel Neill, David Nelson, VAMPIRE CIRCUS, THE MASTER BLACKMAID ER, George East, Erica Rennberg, GORILLA AT LARGE, Horror Italian Style, GORGO, BERSERK!, THE CROOKED MAN, STRANGERS ON A TRAIN, 7 FACES OF DR LAC, CAPTIVE WILD WOMAN, FREAKS, and more!



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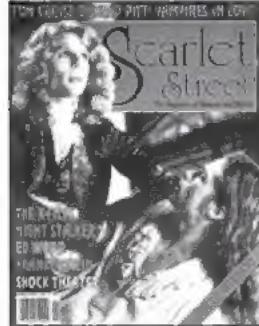
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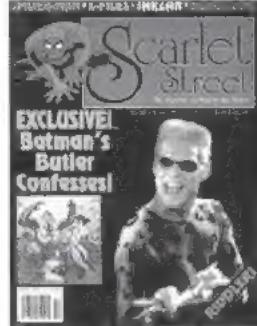
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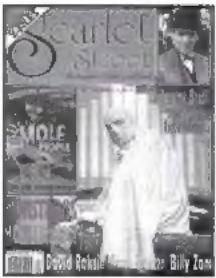
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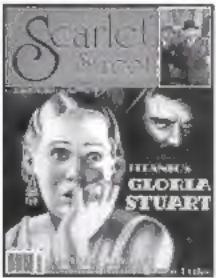
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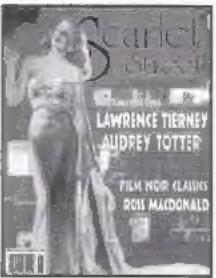
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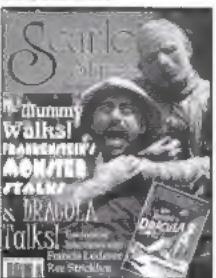
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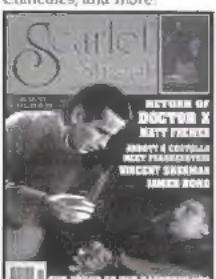
#37: I MARRIED A WITCH, BELL BOOK AND CANDLE, Kathleen Freeman, TOPPER RETURNS, BEWITCHED, Godzillla on DVD, Paramount Horrors, REAR WINDOW's music, Host to Said Ghosts: The Thorpe Smith Story, The Death of Dr. Cyclops, Ed Wood's novels, and more!



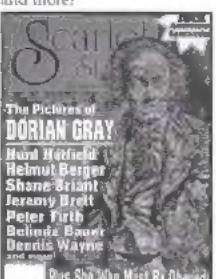
#38: Anne Jeffreys, Robert Sterling, Kasey Rogers, Kathleen Freeman, Paramount Horrors, NOSFERATU on Stage, DRACULA on DVD, THE AVENGERS, TOPPER, PERRY MASON, THE DARK ORIGINS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES, Val Lewton music, and more!



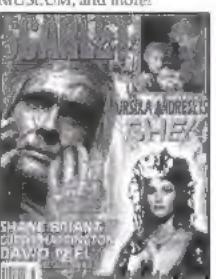
#39: Curt Siodmak, Gene Evans, John Agar, DONOVAN'S BRAIN, BRAIN FROM PLANET AROUS, THE X-FILES, SHADOW OF FU MANCHU, Ygor: Horror's Cock-eyed Optimist, Furry Ackerman, THE LADY AND THE MONSTER, and more!



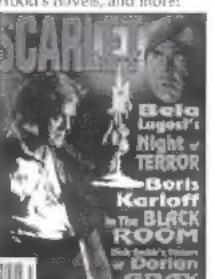
#40: Matt Frewer, Vincent Sherman, THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X, THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES, ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN, Dark Passages: The World of Film Noir, POIROT, SCREAM, James Bond, and more!



#41: Hurd Hatfield, Helmut Berger, Curt Siodmak, THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY, Horror Italian Style: Mario Bava on DVD, BEACH PARTY, THE BEAST WITH FIVE FINGERS, Empire of the Imagination: She, Furry Ackerman, and more!



#42: Shane Briant, THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY, Ursula Andress, SHE, Curtis Harrington, Robert Tinnell, Crosby, Hope, and Lamour: The Road Pictures, Elizabeth Shepherd, David Peel as Dorian Gray, USHER, Zacherley, and more!



#43: THE BLACK ROOM, NIGHT OF TERROR, THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY, SHE, Dick Smith's Dorian Gray makeup, Universal Horrors on DVD, Marilyn Monroe Diamond Collection, Erotic Thrillers, THE MENACE, Columbia Horrors, and more!



#44: Christopher Lee, Harry Alan Towers, THE FACE OF FU MANCHU, SHE, Lurking Upon the Rooftops: Fanto-mas, Gunfight at the DVD Corral, Record Rack, HORATIO HORNBLOWER, Don Dohler, The Many Faces of Christopher Lee, and more!



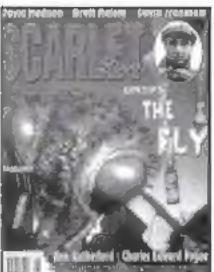
#45: NERO WOLFE, Christopher Lee, Maury Chaykin, Harry Alan Towers, Pulp Fiction, Tim Burton, BRIDES OF FU MANCHU, Bruce Kimmel, THE FIRST NUDE MUSICAL, THE ADVENTURES OF ELLERY QUEEN, Dr. Mabuse on DVD, The Night Stalker comic, and more!



#46: Julie Adams, Ricou Browning, Lori Nelson, Ben Chapman, John Bromfield, Tom Hennessy, Brett Halsey, CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON, David J. Skal, Ted A. Tally, David Drake, NERO WOLFE, CASE OF THE WHITECHAPEL VAMPIRE, and more!



#47: Evelyn Keyes, Ann Rutherford, Columbia Horrors, The Creature's Cane Pool, Julie Adams, Ricou Browning, Lori Nelson, Ben Chapman, Tom Hennessy, FRANKENSTEIN ON STAGE, Forrest J Ackerman's Crimson Chronicles, Disney's Unburied Treasures, and more!



#48: David Hedison, Brett Halsey, David Frankham, THE FLY, Ann Rutherford, Charles Edward Pogue, WHISTLING IN THE DARK, Ricou Browning, Tom Hennessy, FERRY ACKERMAN, The Comic Book Creature, Classic Musicals on DVD, Television Detectives, and more!



#49: Music to Die For: Jeepers Creepers, Muscling in on the Movies, Gordon Scott, Mark Forest, Reg Lewis, Attack of the Horror Hags, Charles Edward Pogue, Anthony Perkins Sings, Screamers: Cute Guys in Their Underpants Drop Dead, Fiends of a Feather on DVD, Television Detectives, and more!



#50: Debbie Reynolds, Julie Harris, Kate Phillips (Kay Linaker), The Great Charlie Chan Ban, WHATEVER HAPPENED TO AUNT ALICE, NIGHT WARNING, FLESH FEAST, John Ireland on Joan Crawford, THAT COLD DAY IN THE PARK, and more!



#51: THE BLOB, Kate Phillips (Kay Linaker), Van Helsing: The Man Who Slew Too Much, PETER PAN, Musicals and More, Twilight of the Horror Gods! James Whale and Tod Browning, and more!



#52: Patricia Monson, Peggy Webber, Van Helsing: The Man Who Slew Too Much, Hollywood Gothic Redux, Fay Wray Remembered, Mummy's the Word: Universal Horror Legacies, and more!



#53: Virginia Mayo, Joel Schumacher, Natalie Shaefer, Dark Passages: The World of Film Noir, FEMALE ON THE BEACH, PHANTOM OF THE OPERA, Miss Marple, THE NIGHT STALKER, and more!

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—Zacherley, the Cool Ghoul



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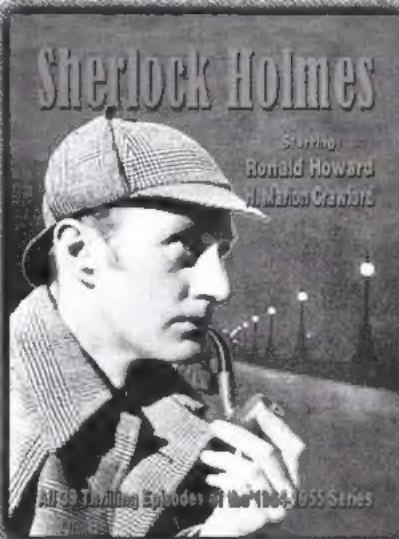
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SCARLET LETTERS

Continued from page 4

in a scene from *THE KING & I* at a lecture, I was anxious to read the interview with her. Ms. Morison certainly didn't disappoint! As a result of reading the interview, I just remembered my mother doing a facial impersonation of her years ago while we were watching *DRESSED TO KILL*—which is pretty funny, since my mom already had the same pert little nose and pouty mouth.

Read Michael Barnum's Peggy Webber interview during lunch, and am I impressed! Who knew there was more to poor, bedeviled "Jenny" than that godforsaken *SCREAMING SKULL*? I'd recognized her in *THE WRONG MAN*, but to read about her very engrossing career was a revelation, as these things go. And the remembrance of the remarkable (and so much more so than I'd previously known) Fay Wray was moving, indeed.

Bob Gutowski

Jackson Heights, NY

Contrary to reports in The New York Times, Tennessee Williams had nothing to do with *THE BRIDES OF DRACULA*. The screenplay was written by William Inge and originally titled *THE DRAC AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS*.

It's too bad reviewer Robin Anderson didn't like Hammer's *STRAIGHT ON 'TIL MORNING* [Scarlet Street #51] as much as I did. Of course, the characters are all unsympathetic—that's precisely

the point. Its poor, put-upon heroine Rita Tushingham is revealed to be a liar and a cheat; virtually everyone she meets is harsh and despicable, from her boss to her shopmates; and Clive (Shane Briant) is absolutely terrifying as an androgynous, effeminate fop. The story appears to be a nod to the Moors murderers' case of the mid-sixties, i.e. a strong male putting a mousy, unattractive girl under his spell and his habit of tape-recording the killings. Audiences rejected such a strong departure from Hammer, and the film was consigned to obscurity. In a way, it paved the way for the uncompromising shockers of director Pete Walker, *FRIGHTMARE* (1974) and *HOUSE OF WHIPCORD*. Speaking of which—rest in peace, Sheila Keith. The work of this underappreciated actress would perhaps make for an ideal article in *Scarlet Street*.

Greg Goodsell
Bakersfield, CA

I've finally had an opportunity to sit down and peruse *Scarlet Street* #52. What a wonderful interview with Patricia Morison. She sounds like quite a lovely lady! I was quite touched by Rick McKay's recollections of Fay Wray. I well remember his interview with her in *Scarlet Street* #27. It was a wonderful tribute to someone for whom he obviously has a great love.

Lastly, I want to say thank you for doing such a fantastic job on my Peggy Webber interview. Ms. Webber is a

smart, talented, sweet woman, and it was a pleasure to have the opportunity to talk with her.

Michael Barnum
Salem, OR

Rewatching the DVD of *TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE* recently made me wonder more about the stories I'd heard about the film and its creation. I've been chasing down some more information on Tom Graeff and David Love, and stumbled across the various threads on your magazine's bulletin board about them and the film. (I do like your various revivals of the Tom Graeff thread itself, I do similar things on a couple of boards I'm on with fave pet topics of my own!)

I gather from the threads that *Scarlet Street* #11 has the first part of Graeff's story, while you had mentioned wanting to do more in the future. Were any follow-up articles published on either Graeff or Love, and, if so, in what issues? Much thanks in advance!

Ned Raggett
ned@kuci.org

No follow-up articles yet, though we've been promising them for years. However—we're preparing a couple of *Fabulous Fifties* issues in the near future and Graeff and Love will be prominently featured. Don't miss it!

I wanted to drop you a line to tell you that I enjoy *Scarlet Street* very much. While there are a lot of magazines devoted to movies and video, yours is the

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one I consistently look for at the news stand. I especially enjoyed the essay LOVE THAT BLOB (Scarlet Street #52). Video Watchdog recently printed a long article attempting to tie in the Johnny Quest cartoon show with the old Doc Savage pulp series. Frankly, I never did get the connection. Your BLOB article made a lot more sense.

James Hold
Missouri City, TX

Scarlet Street #52 is terrific. I was very pleased to learn that Richard Valley is going to do a book on the Basil Rathbone/Nigel Bruce Sherlock Holmes series. I'll look forward to getting my hands on a copy in 2006.

Just purchased the Mummy Legacy DVD set. If nothing else, I was glad to see the restored footage of Mary Gordon getting a death hug from Kharis in THE MUMMY'S TOMB, which was inexplicably cut from the VHS version.

Just curious—do you recall an episode of THE DICK POWELL THEATRE called "The Clock?" It was a supernatural story with Wayne Rogers. At the time, I thought it was quite good (of course, I was only twelve when it aired) and I'd still like to see it again.

Keep up the good work
Bruce Dettman

San Francisco, CA

Never saw "The Clock," but perhaps one of our faithful readers will be able to write and fill in some details. On another episode, Dick Powell debuted an inspector character named

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first issue of Monster Bash magazine. And thank you for the ROCKFORD FILES anecdote!

Burke who went on to be played by Cem Barry on BURKE'S LAW

My uncle up in PA recently sent me a copy of the article "Sherlock Holmes Meets the Creeper." I have no idea where the article is from, since there was no running title header. Anyway, congratulations on a good article, especially the part about Rondo Hatton, I was unaware of his personal history. Back in the fifties, my uncle (he's only four years older than me) and I watched horror movies with an undying passion—and, of course, Rondo Hatton was a household name!

I was amused by your reference to Frank Zappa and how most people have never heard of Rondo. There was a great reference to Rondo in the TV show THE ROCKFORD FILES (you know, with James Garner). In one episode, Jim Rockford is once again beaten up or somehow wronged and he complains (I'm paraphrasing), "What's the matter with me? I'm no Rondo Hatton" I might have forgotten Garner's exact line, but I'll never forget that he (or the writer, who was probably Stephen J. Cannell) mentioned Rondo Hatton!

John H. Epler
Wakulla Springs, FL

John, the article was adapted by me from my liner notes for the MPI Home Video DVD releases of the Basil Rathbone/Nigel Bruce Sherlock Holmes series, due to be published next year in book form by McFarland & Co. greatly expanded, of course. It ran in the

Scarlet Street #52 is worthy of that "Best Issue Ever" blurb you used to see on the cover of Famous Monsters back in the day. Richard Valley's interview with Patricia Morrison is one of the best Scarlet Street has ever published. What a lovely, witty woman, and what wonderful memories and anecdotes! The conclusion of the Van Helsing article fulfilled the promise of Part One. I hope Farnham Scott favors us with another full-length article in the future. And David Skal proves again to be a masterful historian. Excellent work by Michael Barnum on the Peggy Webber interview, too!

The DVD reviews were great, as always. I especially enjoyed Ken Mogg's Hitchcock reviews, Lelia Loban's HORATIO HORNBLOWER, Ron Morgan's I MARRIED A MONSTER FROM OUTER SPACE, Ken Hanke's JEEPERS CREEPERS 2, and Harry Long's PHANTOM OF THE OPERA. Oh, hell, I enjoyed them all!

Brian Norliss
Norliss@aol.com

I'm a longtime subscriber and always enjoy your magazine. I've been a "Fan of Chan" (THE GREAT CHAN BAN, Scarlet Street #50) since I was a child in the fifties, living here in Los Angeles. My dad liked the films, so we started watching

Continued on page 14

Frankly Scarlet

Last November, Tom Amorosi and I journeyed cross-country by train to celebrate the 88th birthday of the one and only Dr. Agatha Furtress Ackerman, editor of the original (accept no substitutes!) *Famous Monsters of Filmland* and *Scarlet Street's Crimson Chronicle* for the past 10 years. Basking in the sunny climes of Sunny Cal, I posted some details of our visit on the Scarlet Street Message Boards...

Tuesday November 9 7:36 pm Tom and I will be heading for Kvilleifornia on Thursday and staying w/ th pal Joe Moe and a kindly old gentleman with the unlikely name of 41 - at a place called the Acker mini-mansion. We'll be traveling by train and I'm looking forward to three wonderful days of rest and relaxation while we make tracks.

Once we get to Horrorwood, I'll be doing some research for my upcoming book on the Basil Rathbone & Nigel Bruce Sherlock Holmes films and radio shows. We'll also be catching up with old friends and meeting some new ones in person for the first time. I just got off the phone with DRESSED TO KILL star Patric a Morrison and we'll be getting together. We'll be having a real Kellekarian dinner at the beach with NIGHT STALKER stars Jack Grinnage and Carol Ann Susi, and another dinner with Kasey (BLWTCBDY) Rogers and her partner Mark Wood. We'll also be seeing Bruce Kimmel (producer of *Scarlet Street's HELPERS CREEPERS GREAT SONGS FROM HORROR FILMS*, Curtis (MOON, GREETING) Armstrong and 2 others.

And then there's Uncle Jerry's big birthday bash on the 20th, where we'll cheer Mr. Monster and catch up with everyone we haven't already caught.

Sunday November 16 6:31 pm Well here we are, happily ensconced for the week at the wonderful new Acker mini-mansion. We had a sweet trip. Spent five hours in Chicago where I took Tom to lunch for his birthday. We spent the

train ride looking at some gorgeous scenery (why do so many wacky citizens decorate their back yards with junked cars and old tires?), and reading Agatha Christie mysteries (*Murder in the Orient Express*, of course and *Mystery of the Blue Train*.) Joe picked us up at the station, we dropped off our luggage, said hi to Jerry, did a little shopping (picked up a gift for Patricia Morrison), had a little lunch and tonight we're off to a concert. I'll try to post updates during our visit, but we're fitting a lot into a very little time.

Monday November 17 3:15 pm Had lunch with Jerry and Joe at a charming spot called Mimi's (that funny little good for nothing). Made dinner plans with Jack and Carol Ann for Thursday, and Wednesday we'll be paying a call on Patricia Morrison. Waiting to hear from Kasey and I'm about to make a call to a certain Mr. Kimmel.

Monday November 17 11:01 pm Just got back from seeing THE INCREDIBLES with Jerry and Joe. Terrific film and there was a small stage show before the feature presentation that was tons of fun. Tomorrow I'll be researching my book, and then we'll join Jack Morrison, Tim Sullivan and Alan Skinner for dinner. Alan is the former owner of the great Creature Features store in Burbank. Tim's new film is 2000 MANIACS, and Jack's a talented writer whose partner, Bill Gordon, wrote and directed the brilliant KINSLY.

Tuesday November 18 11:02 pm Dined with Jack (who reports that the New York reviews for KINSLY were raves). Tim (who showed us pix of the extremely attractive cast of 2000 MANIACS), and Alan, who we'll see again on Friday at the Magic Castle. Lots of gossip and laughs and promises that Tom and I will return soon to LA. Tomorrow Patricia Morrison, Bruce Kimmel and Kasey Rogers. We're definitely going to run out of time before we get to see everyone we'd planned to see.

Wednesday November 19 11:16 am I'm continually and pleasantly amazed by Jerry's stunning recovery from his past illness. At 88, he's sharper as a tack. We've just talking

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LEFF The Ackermobile waits outside the Acker-mini-mansion. **RIGHT** (Top to Bottom) dinner with Tom Amorosi, Al Reditor, Kasey Rogers, Bruce Kimmel, and Mark Wood; dinner with Joe Moe, me an' Tom, Tim Sullivan, Jack Morrison, and Alan Skinner on the Santa Monica Pier with Jack Grinnage and Carol Ann Susi. Jerry Ackerman being reminded of his age. Tom, Linda Chaney, and Ron Chaney wearing his Great Granddad's LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT top hat and clutching his vampire teeth.



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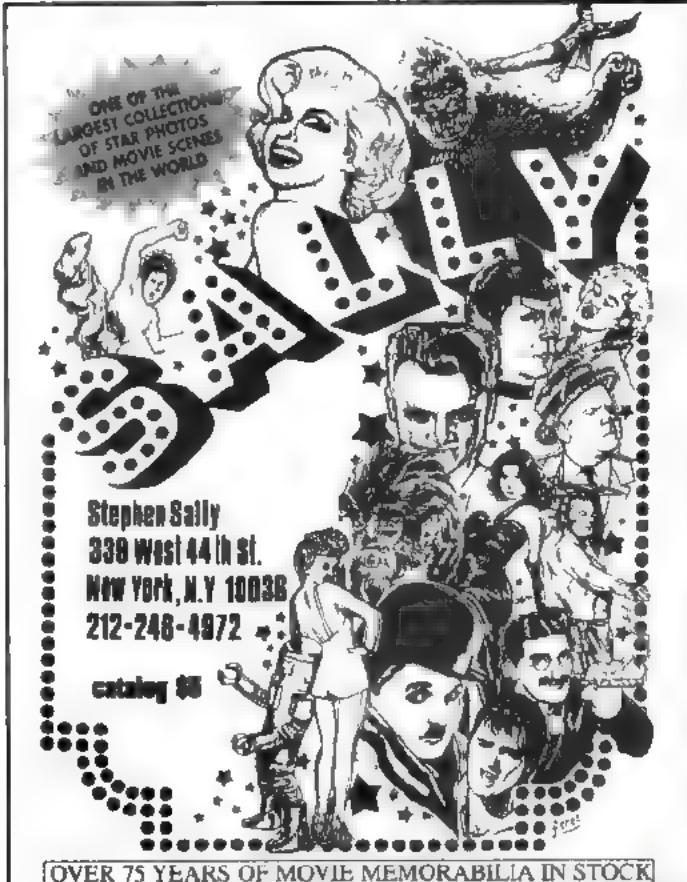
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SCARLET LETTERS

Continued from page 11

and the rest is history. I have managed to tape most of them off the cable, sat dish over time and have found factory tapes of some of the Fox and Monogram titles. The movies stand the test of time, and they're fun to watch. When I was stationed in Hawaii in the early seventies, there was always a CHAN THEATRE on TV and the locals loved them! That place is an ethnic melting pot. I think it's a stupid move to cave in to the special interest faction. These movies are true classics, with a charm that the modern Hollywood has yet to duplicate. The flavor of the week blockbuster will be long forgotten and the Chans will be fondly remembered.

I awaited the second installment of Leonard Kohl's Kay Linaker interview to see if she would comment on her Western BLACK ACES, with the great Buck Jones. He was a personality with charm and charisma, and I still enjoy his work. Boston's Coconut Grove fire in 1942 ended his life, although he already had started doing inferior Westerns by then.

Ms. Linaker made several comments about Ricardo Cortez that I am sure are true, but I have enjoyed his work in several good thirties mysteries, including 13 WOMEN, THE PHANTOM OF CRESTWOOD, and the original MALT-ESE FALCON. Some of these films were mentioned in the letter from Mr. Kujawa. He has every right to his opinion, of course. I have seen these titles—some several times—and they are en-

joyable. What I am really trying to say is that all of these actors had personalities on and off the screen. All of us in everyday life have personality conflicts—either professional or personal—but the work is what matters. Considering the amount of product Mr. Cortez appeared in, he had to have had something on the ball. We are all human and subject to foibles and demons, as we find out through the interviews with the cherished few left that can tell what it was like all those many years ago. It's up to us and the unique publication that is *Scarlet Street* to keep these memories alive for future generations to enjoy. Keep up the good work!

Herb Deeks
Anaheim, CA

Richard Valley's interview with Patricia Morison (*Scarlet Street* #52) was a really outstanding piece of work. Ms. Morison's comments on the birth of *KISS ME, KATE* were very revealing.

Always a huge draw on Broadway, Cole Porter had been enjoying an unbroken string of five hits—DUBARRY WAS A LADY, PANAMA HATTIE (inspired by a song in the previous show, "Katie Went to Haiti"), LET'S FACE IT (which was based on a 1925 farce, THE CRADLE SNATCHERS), SOMETHING FOR THE BOYS (which is still famous for its incredible plotline, in which Ethel Merman was able to safeguard the security of the Army by receiving code messages through the fillings in her teeth), and Mike Todd's lavish production of MEXICAN HAYRIDE. But, then,

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Porter got involved in a very notable flop—Billy Rose's production of SFVEN LIVELY ARTS, which was essentially a "highbrow review" featuring Porter's score, sketches by Moss Hart, Ben Hecht, and George S. Kaufman; paintings by Salvador Dali; and Igor Stravinsky's 20-minute divertissement, "Scenes du Ballet." The glittering cast included Beatrice Lillie, Bert Lahr, Dolores Gray, and ballet stars Ahna Markova and Anton Dolin.

Unfortunately, another flop quickly followed, Orson Welles' gargantuan production of AROUND THE WORLD (based on the Jules Verne novel). The show was originally produced by Michael Todd, who couldn't contend with Welles' enormous ego and quickly bowed out of the production. Porter, too, eventually became disenchanted with both the man and the production and actually left New York the day before the opening, thereby offering his flat out negative assessment to the show's creator.

When Porter returned to Broadway after the tepid response to the MGM film, THE PIRATE, for which he had written the score, he decided to work with Elaine Carrington, a well known writer of sentimental soap-operas, on a musical about a beauty contest. At the same time, Arnold Saint Subber, who had been the stage manager for the Lunts, had a wonderful idea for a musical based on the famous couple's offstage bickering during a performance of THE TAMING OF THE SHREW. Saint Subber had enlisted the famous costume-and-set designer, Lemuel Ayres, as his

coproducer, and had already been rejected by composer Burton Lane, who'd been overwhelmed with offers after the success of FINIAN'S RAINBOW. Saint Subber and Ayres were successful, although, in attaining the services of Sam and Bella Spewack, who had become well known for their comedy, BOY MEETS GIRL.

Bella Spewack went to work getting Porter to write the score. She didn't have an easy time of it. Porter had been criticized for being too highbrow with his last two stage flops. He felt that anything Shakespearean could only have a limited run on Broadway, but he finally gave in—though he'd been told by Oscar Hammerstein himself that he should remain with his beauty-contest musical.

Of course, the rest is history. Cole Porter won his first Tony for his incredible score and KISS ME, KATE won for Best Musical. The producers, Saint Subber and Lemuel Ayres won, too, as did the librettists, Sam and Bella Spewack. Ayres also won a second Tony for his brilliant costumes. KISS ME, KATE became Porter's most successful musical (it racked up 1,077 performances in New York) and he would later say that it was "my second perfect show" after 1934's ANYTHING GOES.

By the way, can you tell me who wrote the Abbott and Costello article in SS #52? There wasn't any byline.

Raymond Banacki

Brooklyn, NY

Ye Gods! I hate it when there's an oversight like that! Who can I blame? Uhh—me, I guess. It was a terrific review and it was penned by Mark Clark, to whom I extend my sincere apologies. And thanx for the background info on the original Broadway production of KISS ME, KATE, Ray. It made for fascinating reading.

A while back I wrote to compliment you on your notes on the Sherlock Holmes DVD releases—don't know if you got that e-mail. (It didn't require a response.) But I love what you've done—the informed opinionated nature of your comments are real frosting on the cake on both the Jeremy Brett and Basil Rathbone releases. I think I own every Holmes on DVD, including the new BBC one, and I just completed the Russian series. (Are you aware that the rest of it came out on PAL format recently?) I also sent for the complete set of the Ronald Howard TV show, as advertised in Scarlet Street, since it promised more note by RV. I am a fan.

Did you contribute any to the first Brett boxed set? I had bought those in-

dividual.y and am such a fan of your notes, I considered buying the box just to get 'em—but I wasn't sure they existed.

Max Allan Collins

Muscatine, IA

If Max is a fan, then it's a mutual admiration society—I've been a fan of his work since his classic work on the Dick Tracy comic strip from 1977 to 1993. Movie fans know Max's work from ROAD TO PERDITION, adapted from his graphic novel. His new book, The War of the Worlds Murder, is wonderful as well. (And as Welles. And as Wells.) I'm extremely pleased and proud that my work is going to be featured side by side with something by Max in an upcoming anthology. (See page 73.) I didn't contribute liner notes to the first 13 episodes of the Brett series on DVD, but that oversight is due to be corrected in the near future.

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Transcribed from his Devil's Diary

By Dr. Acula . . .

April 1st, 2005 would have been the 102nd birthday of Lon Chaney had he lived. On the memorable occasion I sat with Ray Bradbury and witnessed a private screening of his astounding new film, *A SOUND OF THUNDER*. When you go see it (run, don't walk), leave your mind behind or risk having it blown away! Travelers to prehistoric times shooting a T-rex, pterodactyls flying over a Chicago of 2025 A.D. (After Dracula), human beings evolved not from simian stock but dinosaurs!!! I remembered another April 1st when I was in a car parked at the border between Spain and Portugal. Bobbie Bresee, star of *MAUSOLEUM* and the remake of *THE WASP WOMAN*, got out of the car momentarily to go to a convenience store and came back hysterically screaming "They've taken my passport!" Her macho husband Frank was halfway out of the car and ready to fight the entire Spanish army when Bobbie pointed to a sign with the date on it and laughed, "April Fools!" She sure had us convinced!

My 88th birthday was held at Thailand Plaza in Hollyweird, Karloffmania and attended by 250 of my favorite people. Brad Linaweafer, coauthor on my recent coffee table book *Worlds of Tomorrow*, was master of ceremonies and introduced some of the terrific guests who had flown in from all over the country. Director Curtis Harrington; Anne Robinson (*WAR OF THE WORLDS*—original and Spielberg's latest); Curtis Armstrong (*REVENGE OF THE NERDS*); writer Pam Keesey (*Vamps*); director Bill Malone (*THE HAUNTING*); Terry and Anita Pace and my little namesake, Forrest Bradbury Pace (sung: baby-Pace, you got the cutest little baby-Pace); Bill "Keep Watching the Skies" Warren; A. E. van Vogt's widow, Lydia; sci-fi novelist Victor Komen; producer Kevin Burns; Ron and Margaret Borst, cocreators of Graven Images; Pilar Binyon (representing the Seattle Sci-Fi Museum); my wizard lawyer against Ray Ferry, Jacie Applebaum; and lots of *Scarlet Street* friends, including Tom Amorosi and Richard Valley. It was standing room only at this Saturday afternoon event and the Thai staff seemed mystified and tickled as we ate exotic foods to the ethereal, otherworldly sounds of

"Happy Birthday" played live on a Theremin and sung to me by Chase Masterson (*BABYLON 5*)! This year's party favor was a full-color collectible poster whipped up for me (and of me) by Bat Pack pals Joe Moe, John Goss, and Bill Chancellor. You can order a copy for yourself in the pages of this mag. After lunch, the party moved to my Acker-mini-mansion, where Juan Camacho, Sean and Silke Fernald, Shel Dorf, and a number of fan friends watched me open the many treasures my friends had given me. Richard and Tom gave me a fantastic collection of Al Jolson DVDs. It was one of my fa-



Dr. Acula moons us during his 88th birthday celebration!

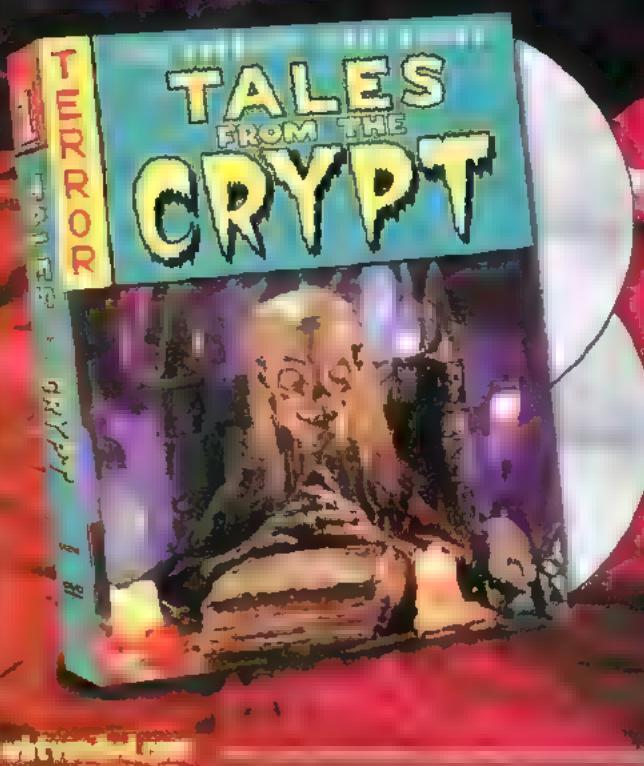
vorite birthdays ever—and I've had a few! When I finally went to bed, there were still a dozen people camping out in every available space on my floor. When I woke up for my regular "midnight snake" (leftover birthday cake this time) Richard, Tom, Pam Keesey, Al Paige, John Stoskopf, Bill Chancellor, Joe Moe, and Lee Byrns were still sitting around laughing and enjoying themselves. Special thanks to Joe for throwing another landmark party—88 was great and 89 is going to be just fine. On a sad note, the lovely lady responsible for the decorations for my last six birthdays was recently killed in a car crash during the terrible rains here in California. Lynette Juniel, we'll miss you.

Was happy to reunite with pals Robert Englund, John Landis, Mick Garris, and his lovely wife at the screening of FM fan and now moviemaker Tim Sullivan's *10,001 MANIACS!* The film was a fun throwback to the original days of the teen-slasher films of the seventies and seventies. I don't usually enjoy blood and guts movies, but this one was infused with so much of Tim's good-natured love of the genre that I think fans will like it! It was terrific

to visit with the excited cast and crew after the screening. The mini-hamburgers at the after-party were great!

Oh, dear; Terri Merritt-Pinckard, 74, my longest-known lady fan friend (over half a century), just died. She was a Grande Dame of the prestigious Count Dracula Society and the recipient of a highly honored Big Heart Award. She had a famous feature in *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, "Monsters are Good for My Children," and prided herself on owning a complete mint set of all 200 issues of *FM*. Her "The Hate" was named one of the best horror stories of 1975 and was reprinted recently in my *Sci-Fi Womanthology*. She had an original lesbian-oriented story, "A Little Planet Of Our Own," anthologized in my *Dr. Acula's Thrilling Tales of the Uncanny*. In the early days of radio, she scripted a series of stories for *WEIRD TALES*. For years in her home in Santa Maria, CA, known as Far Horizons, she cohosted with her husband Tom "Lucky" Pinckard the famous Science Fiction Writers Society, whose participants in their time included Ray (*Something Wicked this Way Comes*) Bradbury, Charles ("The Crooked Man," a lone heterosexual in a homosexual society of the future) Beaumont, Catherine L. Moore (*Shambleau*), Arthur C. Clarke (nufsed), Don ("Great Gog's Grave") Wollheim, Bjo (the girl who saved *STAR TREK*) Trimble, Wendayne ("Rocket to the Rue Morgue") Ackerman, collaborators Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, Sherwood ("No Land Of Nod") Springer, E. Everett Evans ("Food For Demons"), Thelma Hamm ("Gallie's House"), Ross ("Time Wants a Skeleton") Rocklynne, A.E. (Slan) van Vogt and fantasy author wife E. Mayne Hull, and Manny Moore (and many more)! Dr. Walter J. Daugherty (FM photog of the Mon-Stars) and Mary Ellen Robagliatti, who spent six months miniaturizing my Ackerman-sation (currently on display atop my Acker-mini-mansion refrigerator), were married in Terri's living room. Mrs. Pinckard was a great personal friend of Fritz (*Conjure Wife*) Leiber. Too much cannot be said of her. She was an angel on this earth. We will not see her likes again. A fond farewell and give my regards to Lon Chaney, Bela Lugosi, Mary Shelley, Bram Stoker, Boris Karloff, and all our icons.

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the NEWS



HOUND

Sit and stay, Scarlet readers! Take a pause and paw through The Hound's passel of pulse-pounding previews of entertainment events in store for this summer and beyond...

Theatrical Thrills

BATMAN BEGINS his return to theater screens in June, in what's intended to be the first of a new series of Caped Crusader features. AMERICAN PSYCHO's Christian Bale swaps his Bateman persona for The Batman, becoming the seventh actor to don the cape and cowl in a big-screen production. (Can you name them all? Check below for The Hound's roll call of Batmen.) The Dark Knight's formative years—"who he is, and how he came to be"—are shown for the first time since the brief flashback in BATMAN (1989). That sequence erroneously depicted The Joker as the killer of Bruce Wayne's parents; BATMAN BEGINS correctly fingers Joe Chill, as played by London stage and film actor Richard Brake. Also in the cast are Liam Neeson, Morgan Freeman, Katie Holmes, Rutger Hauer, Gary Oldman as Lieutenant (later Commissioner) Gordon, and Michael Caine as Wayne family retainer Alfred Pennyworth. Christopher Nolan, the distinctive director of MEMENTO and INSOMNIA, helmed and cowrote the new Batfeature, which opens in ultra-wide-screen IMAX theaters as well as traditional venues.

Also in theaters in June: BEWITCHED, an update of the sixties sitcom from SLEEPLESS IN SEATTLE writer/director Nora Ephron, stars Nicole Kidman and Will Ferrell as actors portraying Samantha and Darrin Stevens in a TV sitcom, with snide support from Shirley MacLaine as the actress playing Sam's mom Endora... Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie are MR. AND MRS. SMITH, a married couple who, unbeknownst to each other, lead secret lives as hired assassins. Yes, that's right, it's a romantic comedy. (And, no, it has nothing to do with the 1941 Hitchcock film)... His trademark warm and fuzzy aliens are nowhere in sight in director Steven Spielberg's WAR OF THE WORLDS, adapted from H.G. Wells' 1898 novel by JURASSIC PARK and SPIDER-MAN scripter David Koepp, and starring (and coproduced by) Tom Cruise. (Watch for a cameo by Ann Robinson, star of George Pal's 1953 version.)

Upcoming Attractions

In July, Marvel Comics' superheroes The FANTASTIC FOUR take to the big screen for the first time (not counting Roger Corman's oft-bootlegged but nev-

er-released 1994 low-budgeter). Starring as the Marvelous quartet are Ioan Gruffudd, Michael Chiklis, Jessica Alba, and newcomer Chris Evans. Suave Julian McMahon portrays archenemy Victor Von Doom—that's Doctor Doom, to you.

More in store for July: DARK WATER is based on a 2002 Japanese horror feature from Hideo Nakata, writer/director of the original Japanese version of THE RING. It stars Jennifer Connelly, who finds that her new apartment has a former tenant who continues to haunt the place—literally. Get it? It's a ghost. THE ISLAND from ARMAGEDDON director Michael Bay, is a LOGAN'S



BATMAN BEGINS his career in his latest big-screen adventure. Christian Bale plays the Caped Crusader; Katie Holmes is the damsel in distress.

RUN-style story starring Ewan McGregor and Scarlett Johansson as future folks who take it on the lam once they discover that they're clones, slated to be harvested for spare parts... Terry Gilliam brings another broad fantasy adventure to the screen with THE BROTHERS GRIMM. Matt Damon and Heath Ledger play a pair of con men in 19th-century France who scam local villages into paying them to vanquish fake monsters... Hollywood's resident chameleon Johnny Depp teams again with director Tim Burton to play canny confectioner Willy Wonka in CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY, a new adaptation of Roald Dahl's 1964 book. Helena Bonham Carter and SLEEPY HOLLOW compadre Christopher Lee are along for the tooth-rotting ride.

Debuting in August: Steve Martin hopes not to "bump" as Inspector Clouseau in THE PINK PANTHER... Wes Craven turns down the gore level in RED EYE, a suspense thriller featuring Rachel McAdams and Christian Murphy... Kate Hudson stars in the supernatural drama SKELETON KEY, along with John Hurt and Gena Rowlands... Piper Perabo encounters excitement, dampness and fear in THE CAVE, a decidedly nonFreudian horror thriller from MATRIX crew veteran and first-time director Bruce Hunt.

Future Features

Just as BATMAN BEGINS, so SUPERMAN RETURNS in a brand-new feature version of the celebrated superhero's origin, due in theaters next June from X-MEN director Bryan Singer. Starring as the newly minted Man of Steel is former soap actor Brandon Routh, who at age 25 is the youngest performer to portray an adult Superman. Blonde, beachy 21-year-old Kate Bosworth is the dicey choice for Lois Lane, and Kate's BEYOND THE SEA costar, Oscar-winner Kevin Spacey, has been cast as Lex Luthor. Frank Langella has been tapped for peevish Daily Planet editor Perry White, while director Singer's X-MEN chum James Marsden plays Perry's son Richard—Clark Kent's rival for Lois's affections. Lending a classy presence is Eva Marie Saint as Clark's mom, Martha Kent. Mr. Singer dutifully (and delightfully) retained X-MEN's comic-book roots in his movie version; let's hope he'll do even better for the Number One star of the DC universe.

Horror movie godfather Tobe Hooper gave us THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE, SALEM'S LOT, and POLTERGEIST while still in his thirties. Now Hooper is busy giving a grisly break to up-and-coming horror talent with his new T.H. NIGHTMARES feature film franchise. Due for release later this year is the first title, MORTUARY, which Hooper directed from an original script by Jace Anderson and Adam Gierasch (who also adapted Hooper's 2003 remake of TOOLBOX MURDERS). Now he's tapped writer/producers Chris Kabin and Tim Sullivan for the next entry. Sullivan practically grew up in the independent horror biz; as a teenager in the early eighties, Tim slaved (as did your Hound) as part of makeup master John Dods' effects crew on THE DEADLY SPAWN (coproduced by Scarlet Street's fiendish friend, Ted A. Bohus). As a team, Kabin and Sullivan wrote and produced 2001 MANIACS—a bloody af-

Continued on page 22



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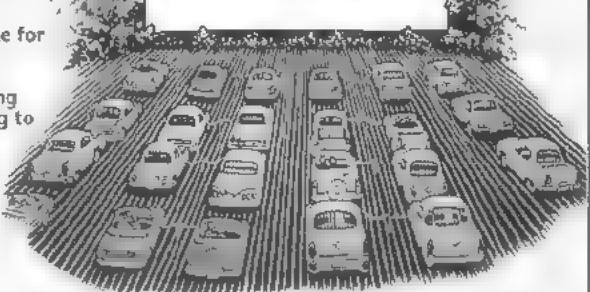
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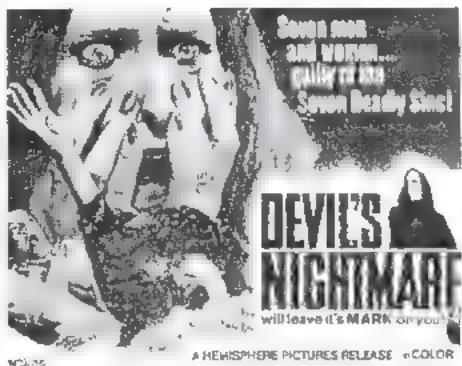
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(DVD item #DI-106D VHS item #DI-106*)

THE GHOST (1983) Barbara Steele, Peter Baldwin. A fine sequel to *Homicide Dr. Hitchcock*. Barbara and her lover plan the murder of her hubby Dr. Hitchcock. They kill him, but is he really dead? Technicolor. 35mm.

DEAD EYES OF LONDON (1981) Joachim Fuchsberger, Karan Becht, Klaus Kinski. A fine remake of Lucas' *The Human Monster*. 16mm.

DRIVE-IN COMBO #107

(DVD item #DI-107D VHS item #DI-107*)

DESTINATION SPACE (1958) Harry Townes, John Agar, Cecil Kellaway, Whitney Blake. Townes and Agar are the commanders of a giant space station spinning through the heavens above Earth. From 16mm.

TERROR IN THE MIDNIGHT SUN (1959) Robert Burton, Barbara Wilson, Stan Geste. Scientists investigate an alien spaceship in Greenland. The aliens deposit a giant, fury monster. 35mm.

DRIVE-IN COMBO #108

(DVD item #DI-108D VHS item #DI-108*)

THE DEVIL'S NIGHTMARE (1971) Enika Blanc, Jean Servais. A group of tourists spends the night with a succubus in the creepy castle of Baron Von Rumford, an alchemist with a dungeon lab. Color. 35mm.

LONG HAIR OF DEATH (1964) Barbara Steele, Robert Rains. A woman under suspicion of witchcraft is burned alive. Her curse brings her back from death for revenge. One of the more obscure of Barbara's films.

DRIVE-IN COMBO #109

(DVD item #DI-109D, VHS item #DI-109*)

CASTLE OF FU MANCHU (1972) Christopher Lee, Richard Greene, dir by James Franco. A cruise liner is sunk by an iceberg! Who's behind it? That's right, Fu Manchu. Color. From 35mm.

I, MONSTER (1971) Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing, Miles Raven. In a reworking of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Lee plays Dr. Marlowe, who creates a formula to bring out the evil in man. Color. 16mm.

DRIVE-IN COMBO #110

(DVD item #DI-110D VHS item #DI-110*)

GAMMERA THE INVINCIBLE (1996) Brian Donlevy, Albert Dekker. A giant, fire-breathing turtle-like dinosaur is ravaging the countryside. Good special effects. From 16mm.

LAST MAN ON EARTH (1984) Vincent Price. A plague has killed the earth's population and Price is the sole survivor. The other inhabitants are mutant vampires that Price stakes by day and battles at night. 35mm.

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(DVD item #DI-111D VHS item #DI-111*)

WEREWOLF VS. THE VAMPIRE WOMAN (1970) Paul Naschy. A witch turns a girl into a vampire who then seeks revenge. She ends up fighting Paul's werewolf character in the film's finale. Color. 35mm.

CURSE OF THE DEVIL (1973) Paul Naschy, Faye Falcon. Paul is turned into a werewolf by female devil worshippers who are descendants of an ancient witch who was executed by Paul's distant, evil wife. Color. 35mm.

DRIVE-IN COMBO #113

(DVD item #DI-113D VHS item #DI-113*)

TEENAGE BAD GIRL (1987) Anna Neagle, Sydelle Syms. Poor Anna just can't seem to straighten out her delinquent daughter. Her path eventually leads to crime, rebellion, death and finally redemption. 16mm.

TEENAGE WOLFPACK (1957) Henry Bumstead, Karen Baal. A teenage gang commits acts of robbery, violence and murder. 35mm.

DRIVE-IN COMBO #114

(DVD item #DI-114D, VHS item #DI-114*)

ATOMIC ROLLERS OF THE WORLD (1957) Ken Itsuji, Junko Itochita. The high court of the Emerald planet fears that radiation from Earth will destroy their planet. They send Starman to intercede! 16mm.

ATTACK FROM SPACE (1958) Ken Itsuji, Utaiko. It's Starman against a Nazi-like alien beast in the depths of outer space. From 16mm.

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VINCENT PRICE

The Last Man on Earth

DRIVE-IN COMBO #115

(DVD item #DI-115D VHS item #DI-115*)

DEATH IS NIMBLE, DEATH IS QUICK (1967) Brad Harris, Tony Kendall, Ann Smymer. This thriller features sci-fi, ancient temples, martial arts, big explosions, jungle thrills, etc. Color. 16mm.

SO DARLING, SO DEADLY (1967) Tony Kendall, Brad Harris. Two agents are assigned to protect a scientist and his fantastic, laser power beam that can annihilate targets 300 miles away. Color. 16mm.

DRIVE-IN COMBO #116

(DVD item #DI-116D VHS item #DI-116*)

WEREWOLF OF WASHINGTON (1973) Dean Stockwell, Bill McGuire. The President's press secretary is bitten by a werewolf overseas. He goes back to D.C. and wreaks havoc in the Capitol. Color. 16mm.

THE CREMATORS (1972) Marvin Howard, Maria Di Aragon. A scientist discovers a series of bizarre droplets that seem to have a life of their own and are connected to a gigantic energy monster. Color. 16mm.

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VAMPIRE WOMAN**

PAUL NASH, GABY FUCHS, ANDREW REESE

DRIVE-IN COMBO #117

(DVD item #DI-117D VHS item #DI-117*)

HERCULES AND THE PRINCESS OF TROY (1965) Gordon Scott, Paul Stevens. A sea dragon must be fed a female virgin from time to time, otherwise it will wreak havoc upon a Greek city. Color. 16mm.

FURY OF ACHILLES (1962) Gordon Mitchell, Gloria Milland. Achilles leads the Greeks to victory over the Trojans. Color. From 16mm.

DRIVE-IN COMBO #118

(DVD item #DI-118D VHS item #DI-118*)

SCREAM OF THE DEMON LOVER (1971) Jeffrey Chase, Jennifer Harvey, Agostina Belli. A hideously disfigured killer who gets uglier every full moon, terrorizes a village. Unrated. Rated "R." Color. 16mm.

DR. ORLOF'S INVISIBLE HORROR (1970) Howard Vernon. A young doctor arrives at the castle of Dr. Orlof. He encounters a deranged woman who claims to be terrorized by an invisible spirit. Color. 35mm.



"**G**ay Man Climbs Mount Everest in Mink & High Heels!"—That's one of the headlines on the April 11 edition of *Weekly World News*. The story inside was the first of what has become a weekly series titled "Miss Adventure: The Gayest American Hero." It chronicles the exploits of Kevin Andrews, who thus far has followed his climb with trips to the ocean's floor, outer space, and the center of the earth.

Weekly World News is the paper that broke the startling stories about Batboy and Bigfoot. In other words, it's a newspaper to rival—no, surpass—Fox News for fairness and accuracy. However, under the guidance of its new editor-in-chief—New York Times bestselling novelist and presidential confidant Jeff Rovin, known to Scarlet Streeters for *Return of the Wolf Man* (1998)—*Weekly World News* does it with tongue planted firmly in cheek.

"Miss Adventure" is written by Drew Sullivan, a Scarlet Street contributor since its very first issue.

"The Mount Everest article was planned as a one-shot," Sullivan revealed to Scarlet Street publisher Richard Valley, "but the character of Kevin Andrews worked out so well that it was decided to continue his exploits. He's outrageous, but the comedy stems from his character and isn't directed at him. Kevin's unflappable, whether he's scaling Everest or discovering a sand dollar store run by mermaids in the sunken city of Atlantis. He takes no guff."

Indeed, he doesn't. Asked in his

ENTER

Miss Adventure

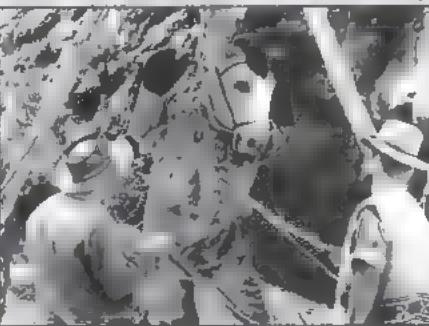
first adventure why he chose to don women's clothes to go mountain climbing, Kevin responded, "For the same reason people climb mountains—because they're there. I have an extensive and eclectic wardrobe. My mink is full-length and extremely warm in even the most inclement weather—and, naturally, I have a matching hat and muff. I wore the hat, but I'm sorry to say I had to leave the muff at home. You can't really climb Mount Everest with your hands in a muff."

Like Rocky Balboa and the Karate Kid, Kevin has an older mentor—in his case, legendary surfer Danny "Dee Dee" Romano, the first man to shoot the curl in full drag. Dee Dee was inspired by the campy Beach Party films of the sixties starring Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello. As Miss Adventure explained it in his second story:

"Dee Dee taught me all about the surfers' life and the meaning of such esoteric terms as 'double spinner' and 'kick out.' He even taught me new definitions for words and phrases I already knew, such as 'hang ten' and 'woodie.' He had me hot-dogging with the best of them. I did everything they did—but I did it with sun block, of course. I'm all for a life of daring do, but not if I'm going to ruin my skin in the process. Some of those guys look like alligator shoes."

Future stories will follow Miss Adventure as he battles vampires and enters the Grand Prix. ("I would never even have gone if Dee Dee hadn't mispronounced the name of the race.") He'll infiltrate the mob and venture way out West, where he'll assume several outrageous disguises. ("I'd lived like a horse, and now I was going to be hung like a horse.")

—Richard Valley



NEWS HOUND

Continued from page 18

fectionate follow-up to Herschell Gordon Lewis' *TWO THOUSAND MANIACS* (1964)—which marked Tim's directorial debut. Their script for the newest of Hooper's *NIGHTMARES* is scheduled to go into production this year.

Sinbad's Excellent Adventure

Director Rob Cohen (*THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS*) and producer Neal Moritz (*2 FAST 2 FURIOUS*) are aiming to provide some fast, furious fantasy fun in Sony/Columbia's *THE 8TH VOYAGE OF SINBAD*. Cohen received the blessing of SINBAD's godfather, 85-year-old animation wizard Ray Harryhausen, who's on board the project as a creative consultant. *MATRIX* man Keanu Reeves has been tapped to inherit Sinbad's saber, proving he's solidly in the same league as former Sinbads Kerwin Mathews, Patrick Wayne and John Phillip Law. In the new PG rated adventure, the manly seaman and crew sail to China to seek Aladdin's lamp. Cohen and Moritz hope to hire *HOUSE OF FLYING DAGGERS*' Ziyi Zhang as Sinbad's beauteous co-swashbuckler.

Déjà Views

Tune up those tubular bells . . . a new feature version of *THE EXORCIST* is rumored to be in the works. Scuttlebutt has Gary Oldman being considered to star in a new remake of William Peter Blatty's original 1971 novel, with busy youngster Dakota Fanning being talked up for the role of diminutive demon-bait Regan McNeil. The adaptation is reportedly by Jim Cash, scripter of the slithery *ANACONDA* movies.

Perhaps it's not "the CITIZEN KANE of horror films" as the late Fred Clarke's *Cinefantastique* so famously hyperbolized, but screenwriter Anthony Shaffer's unique Pagan thriller *THE WICKER MAN* has unquestionably retained its cachet. A high-profile *WICKER* fan—actor/producer Nicolas Cage—seems to have finally succeeded in his efforts to mount a remake.

Some purist James Bond fans consider *CASINO ROYALE* to be the bastard stepchild of the film series—a comic mishmash originated by rival Columbia Pictures, valued more for its class-c Burt Bacharach score than anything else. Now that Columbia/Sony has merged with MGM/United Artists, it's all one big happy spy network. So what's to keep Bond standard bearers EON Productions from mounting their own "serious" version of Ian Fleming's debut 007 novel? Nothing at all, since *CASINO ROYALE* has been announced as the next official Bond release. With Martin Campbell at the helm, and Neal Purvis and Robert Wade scripting, all that's missing is a 007. Rumors have put Brit actors Clive Owen and Daniel Craig in the running, and the door to Universal Exports hasn't completely closed on a return by Pierce Brosnan, either.

She carved a well-displayed notch in movie history with her revealing star



Out actor Chad Allen plays out detective Donald Strachey in *THIRD MAN OUT*, the first of several mysteries from HERE! TV based on the novels of Richard Stevenson.

turn in *BASIC INSTINCT*. Now Sharon Stone has signed on to a sequel—lured by a reported \$15 million paycheck. Stone reprises her role as naughty novelist Catherine Tramell in MGM's London-based production *BASIC INSTINCT 2: RISK ADDICTION* from director Michael Caton-Jones. Costarring is UK stage and TV actor David Morrissey, who portrays a Scotland Yard psychiatrist assigned to ogle—er, evaluate Tramell.

The recent barrage of Hollywood-based Broadway musicals has created a new category on Tinseltown's production slate: the "boomerang" movie musical remake. John Waters' modestly budgeted 1988 fan favorite *HAIRSPRAY* became a big, expensive Broadway smash in 2002, and is still going strong. Now New Line Cinema, distributors of Waters' original, have hired *CHICAGO* producers Craig Zadan and Neil Meron to head up a film version of the stage musical. And *THE PRODUCERS*, Mel Brooks' own smash Broadway adaptation of his 1968 movie comedy classic, is set for filming this year, to be directed by Susan Stroman—a double Tony winner in 2001 for choreographing and directing the stage version. What's next? *FULL MONY: THE MOVIE MUSICAL?* (That would really be hitting bottom.)

Also on Hollywood's retread roster: *THE POSHIDON ADVENTURE* from director Wolfgang Petersen . . . *STRANGERS ON A TRAIN*, coscripted by David Seltzer . . . *WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE* from Stephen Sommers . . . *THE FOG* starring Selma Blair . . . *BLACK CHRISTMAS* from Glen Morgan and James Wong . . . *THE CRAZIES*, a remake of the George Romero thriller by writer/director Brad Anderson . . . *THE LEGEND OF ZORRO* with returning costars Antonio Banderas and Catherine Zeta Jones . . . and sequels *SAW 2*, *X-MEN 3*, *FINAL DESTINATION 3-D*, and a prequel to *THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE*.

Tempura of Terror

The popular horror flicks *THE RING* and *THE GRUDGE* helped bring the moody, understated style of modern Japanese horror films into the mainstream—both features were remakes of top-grossing Japanese originals. Hollywood is now

in the throes of a "J-Horror" jag, with lots more remakes on the production slate. Released last March was *THE RING 2*, directed by Hideo Nakata, helmer of the original Japanese hit *RINGU* (He also directed the sequel to his own original, *RINGU 2*, although the American *RING 2* isn't really a remake of *RINGU 2*—are you following this?) Takashi Shimizu, director and cowriter of *THE GRUDGE* (who, similarly, remade his own thriller entitled *JU-ON*), has been tapped by Columbia to take on *THE GRUDGE 2*—having already produced *JU-ON 2* in his native land, with *JU-ON 3* also in production.

Meanwhile in Hollywood, Kristen Bell is set to star in *PULSE*, a re-do of the 2001 Japanese supernatural thriller *KAIRO*. And, as mentioned earlier, another J-Horror remake *DARK WATER* is due in theaters in July, with a script by original *RING* director Nakata that's a retooling of another of his own Far East originals. And no less than Tom Cruise is producing *THE EYE*, an eerie ghost story based on *JIAN-GUI*, from Hong Kong's Pang Brothers.

Local video rental shops are stocking an increasing number of the Asian originals allowing Stateside fans to catch up on the creepy fun. Just get those spectacles polished up for a session of subtitle scrutiny.

Small Screen Scene

Production has begun in Scotland on the UK telefilm *THE STRANGE CASE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES AND ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE*. Author and screenwriter David Pirie, who penned and coproduced the BBC's 2000 two-parter *MURDER ROOMS*, *THE DARK ORIGINS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES*, continues exploring Conan Doyle's Sherlockian inspirations with this new production. Pirie newly opines that aspects of the author's father, Charles A. Doyle—an alcoholic who was eventually institutionalized—were incorporated into the Holmes persona. Douglas Henshall portrays Conan Doyle fils, with Brian Cox costarring as his medical instructor and mentor, Dr. Joseph Bell—generally considered the direct prototype of the Great Detective.

The popular detective novels of Richard Stevenson, featuring gay gumshoe Donald Strachey, are set for production as a series of made-for-cable movies to be telecast on HERE TV, the pay-cable channel targeted to gay and lesbian viewers. Chad Allen has been cast as Strachey, and production is nearing completion on *THIRD MAN OUT*, the first of a possible seven telefilms based on Stevenson's books. *THIRD MAN OUT*, directed by *QUEER AS FOLK* helmer Ron Oliver, debuts this summer. For more info on the HERE channel, visit their website (www.hertv.com).

Continued on page 81

KOLCHAK Returns to TV

KOLCHAK: THE NIGHT STALKER covers the bizarro beat once again in the new ABC revival series on Thursday nights this fall—but diehard *Carloholics* will find it hard to recognize the Kolchak of old.

Former *X-FILES* writer/producer Frank Spotnitz is running the show—which on the surface sounds like a fitting turn of events, since *KOLCHAK* was a prime influence for the *FILES*. But it seems Spotnitz and/or ABC want to turn *KOLCHAK* into another *X-FILES* by way of *THE FUGITIVE*. Gone is the beloved rumpus newshound persona of Darren McGavin, and in comes a younger Kolchak: Stuart Townsend, the 33-year-old Irish actor who portrayed the Vampire Lestat in *QUEEN OF THE DAMNED* (2002) and Dorian Gray in *THE LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN* (2003).

Set in Los Angeles, the new Kolchak is a crime reporter working for a new Tony Vincenzo, played by Cotter Smith. Kolchak, like *THE FUGITIVE*'s Richard Kimble, is suspected of killing his wife. According to the press release:

"Kolchak's determination to find the truth behind his wife's mysterious murder has led him to investigate other crimes that seem to have some kind of supernatural component. But he's trying to piece together a puzzle that keeps changing shape. Who or what is committing these crimes? How are they all related? And why do some victims end up with a strange red mark on their hands in the shape of a snake? Kolchak will go to any lengths to answer these questions. But when he does discover the truth—will anyone believe him?"

The new Kolchak/Mulder also gains a Scully: cast as the "sexy if skeptical" (sound familiar?) Perri Reed, Carl's colleague in paranormal pursuits, is Gabrielle Union. (Ms. Union is currently shooting the feature-film retooling of *THE HONEYMOONERS*, playing Alice Kramden opposite Cedric the Entertainer as Ralph—which proves that some stories are too terrifying even for Kolchak to tackle.)

—John J. Mathews



SCREEN...

and Screen AGAIN!

Scarlet Street's DVD Reviews

THE NIGHT STALKER

THE NIGHT STRANGLER

MGM Home Entertainment—\$14.95

When the X-FILES gang were still exposing aliens in grade school, Carl Kolchak (Darrin McGavin) was already questioning authority. In two ABC TV movies (the first garnering the highest TV movie ratings of its time) and a short-lived series, newspaper reporter Kolchak investigated murders most foul, following them up whatever supernatural avenues—or down underground streets—they led.

THE NIGHT STALKER (1972) opens, as does the follow-up and the series, with Kolchak recounting his tale into a trusty mini tape recorder. Las Vegas is beset by a series of brutal killings. In each case, the victim is drained of blood through two punctures on the neck. Kolchak makes the obvious connection—a psycho who thinks he's a vampire is on the loose. The police want to hear nothing of Carl's cockamamie theories, nor does his frazzled editor Tony Vincenzo (Simon Oakland).



Prompted by his girlfriend, Gail Foster (Carol Lynley), Kolchak begins to realize that the suspect, Janos Skorzeny (Barry Atwater), is a genuine vampire. Soon, the evidence is too overwhelming for the authorities (played by such fine actors as Claude Akins, Ralph Meeker, Charles McGraw, and Kent Smith) to ignore, but Carl still takes matters—plus a stake and mallet—into his own hands.

A sequel was quickly ordered and 1973 brought THE NIGHT STRANGLER to home screens. Hushed up and kicked out of Vegas, Kolchak finds himself in Seattle, where, coincidentally, Vincenzo is now employed. Carl convinces Tony to hire him and is soon embroiled in a new batch of mysterious murders. This time, young women are being strangled with such strength as to completely crush their throats—and traces of decayed flesh are left behind on the bodies. The victims also suffer a slight loss of blood. With the invaluable assistance of his newspaper researcher, Titus Berry (Wally Cox) Carl uncovers a similar series of murders occurring every 21 years dating back to the late 19th century and linked to Dr. Richard Malcolm (Richard Anderson.) Kolchak and go-go dancer Louise Harper (Jo Ann Pflug), who had friends amongst the victims, descend into Seattle's underground city in search of the doctor and his dark secret.

Produced by Dan Curtis, with a fast-paced script by Richard Matheson (based on Jeff Rice's original story), deft direction by John Llewellyn Moxey, and a suitably creepy score by Robert Corbert, THE NIGHT STALKER was a big hit on first airing, exhibiting a sardonic humor that never detracts from the horrific elements. The telefilm successfully updates supernatural occurrences to fit our modern, jaded times. Kolchak and Vincenzo's hilariously adversarial, yet respectful, relationship is a high

point of the movies and series, and McGavin and Oakland are in top form.

THE NIGHT STRANGLER, directed as well as produced by Curtis, is not quite as successful. Matheson again provides the screenplay, but the similar murders and killer's habits lend it an aura of rehash. Nonetheless, it provides a few chills and features an incredible supporting cast, including John Carradine, Margaret Hamilton, and Al Lewis. Kolchak and Vincenzo's epic battle is even more fun the second time around.

Neither film has ever before looked as good on home video as they do on this new MGM DVD. The previous Anchor Bay DVD was missing a line of dialogue, restored here. STALKER is rich in color and sharply detailed—even during the frequent nighttime scenes—with nary a bit of source damage. STRANGLER fares a bit poorer. Not as sharp as its counterpart, the night scenes are a bit murky. Both have fine, full-bodied mono audio. A dual-sided disc with one feature per side, the only extra is a conversation with Dan Curtis. This feature is split up, one part on each side. We now have the two telefilms on one snazzy disc, which begs the question: Universal, where are the series episodes on DVD?

—Ron Morgan

THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES

MGM Home Entertainment—\$14.95

Love it or hate—and most people fall into the latter category—Paul Morrissey's THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES (1978) is without doubt the strangest version of Arthur Conan Doyle's much-titled Sherlock Holmes novel ever to come down the pike. While it follows the basic outline of the 1902 story, it plays more like CARRY ON SHERLOCK—and had it been made under that title, it might have received slightly more indulgent press.

In truth, it's a film that made its appearance at the wrong time. Its scatter-shot humor and lack of narrative discipline would have seemed much less outré in the late sixties or even the first half of the seventies. By 1978, it looked quaint and jaw-droppingly odd—something exacerbated by the film not being released in the States till 1981, at which time its distributor trimmed seven minutes of its 85 minute running time.

Thankfully, MGM's DVD release restores the film to its full running time and presents it in its proper 2.35:1 wide-screen format. (A full-frame version is available on the flip-side of the disc.) It's a nice looking transfer, but it's still a peculiar movie that isn't going to be to everyone's taste, despite the tantalizing prospect of a cast that includes seemingly the entirety of British Actors' Equity—Peter Cook, Dudley Moore, Denholm Elliott, Joan Greenwood, Hugh Griffith, Irene Handl, Terry-Thomas, Max Wall, Kenneth Williams, Roy Kinnear, Dana Gillespie, Jessie Matthews, Prunella Scales, Penelope Keith, "and a fleeting appearance by Spike Milligan."

The script, cobbled together by Morrissey, Cook, and Moore, is mostly a series of odd comic digressions that rarely have anything to do with the story itself. The film stops dead for Holmes' (Cook) trip to a bawdy house, mostly, it seems, so he can comment on the menu offering what he takes to be "a complimentary grape—what an odd way to spell 'grape' with an 'o.'" The train trip to Baskerville Hall exists so that Sir Henry (Williams) can tell a bizarre story about being washed overboard by a gigantic wave on his trip to England—a setup for Dr. Mortimer (Terry-Thomas) to ask, "Did you drag yourself up on deck?" "Oh, no, I just dressed casual," Sir Henry responds. The old "One Leg Too Few" routine—about a one-legged man auditioning for the role of Tarzan—from Cook and Moore's Broadway show, *GOOD EVENING* (1974), is reworked with Moore applying to Holmes for the job of a runner. And so it goes.

It's largely a matter of taste, but there is another side to the film that suggests more than a passing familiarity with and fondness for the source material. The film is broken down into chapters, using period illustrations from the story, while Morrissey and cinematographer Dick Bush do a splendid job of creating a film that looks for all the world like it was visually based on still photographs from Holmes' movies made in the silent era.

THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES is still uneven, and many of the jokes are more apt to induce groans or bewildered looks than laughs. Cook and Moore as a team were past their prime,



and Cook was already battling alcohol and depression, so there's an occasional sense of them being on autopilot. All the same, it's such a curio and such a collection of talent that it's rarely less than fascinating.

Ken Hanke

THE LOST BOYS: SPECIAL EDITION

Warner Home Video—\$26.99

One of the developments in horror films in the eighties was the rise of the horror/comedy. Teen vampires had an interesting outing in *NEAR DARK* (1987), but Joel Schumacher's *THE LOST BOYS* has enjoyed quite the greatest rise in fan popularity since its pleasant success that same year. Originally it was intended as more of a blend of comedy and horror. With the passage of time, nostalgia for the days of big hair and the antics of Corey Haim and Feldman have

pushed the film firmly into the comedy camp.

Camp is definitely the word for the whiff of lavender that pervades Schumacher's stylish exercise in teen angst. One example is the first reveal of the vampires in full monster array, when they attack not the plentiful young ladies on the boardwalk, but a gang of strong young guys having a bonfire.

Newly arrived in "Murder Capitol" Santa Clara, California with their single mom (Dianne Wiest), Sam (Corey Feldman) and Michael (Jason Patric) are quick to find their way in a community where kids constantly mysteriously vanish. Every tree seems filled with posters of the missing. The boys enjoy the sweaty musical stylings of bodybuilder singer Tim Cappello. Michael is attracted to a lovely young girl, Star (Jami Gertz), but soon comes to realize that she's bait, a lure to draw him into a group of wild-haired boys who party all night and sleep all day. Younger brother Sam has gotten the word from a pair of young vampire hunters (Corey Feldman and Jamison Newlander as the Frog brothers) that Michael is in undead danger. The head of the gang, David (Kiefer Sutherland), takes Michael to his coastline lair to tempt him with mind games and a mysterious bottle. Warned that it contains blood, Michael drinks it on a dare ("How far are you willing to go, Michael? Drink some of this. Be one of us.") Soon Michael is lost in a miasma of montage, clouds, fog, and dreamy sex with Star. It's left to Sam and his friends to rescue Michael before he makes his first kill and seals his doom.

Michael and little brother Sam are close, very close. (Sam says, "I'm at the mercy of your sex glands, bud.") Michael is, as Harry M. Benshoff mentions in his study of homosexuality in the horror film, *Monsters in the Closet* (1997), "coded so heavily as gay that one suspects the production designer must have had a pipeline into gay culture." Certainly the costumes of Susan Becker and the hairstyles of Dino Ganziano drawing from gay fashion and also (for the vampire brood) from punk and urbanwear reinforce Benshoff's observation. Sam's pouty poster of Rob Lowe (from Schumacher's previous teen film, 1985's *ST. ELMO'S FIRE*) and his "Born to Shop" t-shirt also bear this out. In one sequence, Sam is bathing and working untold amounts of mousse into his hair. He's singing a song whose lyrics are, to say the least, ambiguous. ("I sing like a girl . . . I'm a lonely boy . . . I ain't got a man.") Lurking outside the window, Michael is aroused to blood lust for the first time by the sight of his nude brother. Only the family pet dog prevents him from fratricide. This culminates in one of the film's now-restored funniest lines—"My own goddamn brother is a shit-sucking vampire! Wait till Mom finds out, buddy!"

Excellent work is provided by the lush, sweeping cinematography of Mich-



ael Chapman, a very effective music scoring featuring great use of "Cry Little Sister" by Gerald McManus, and a fine opening rendition of The Doors' "People Are Strange," reproduced by Ray Manzarek.

Warner has given this two-disc set a great many extras. Some are merely pleasant and diverting, some fascinating. Of particular note is the section on Greg Cannom and his notable vampire fang work. Another is a fun multiple angle commentary from Corey Feldman, Corey Feldman, and a chatty Jamison Newlander. Also included are about 15 minutes of deleted sequences and lines. After an indifferent earlier single-disc release, it is a joy to see *THE LOST BOYS* looking so well. The color is rich, the blacks solid. The sound seems to have not been updated, but is serviceable and fine. Another great release from Warner Bros., *THE LOST BOYS* will reward both the inveterate fan and first-timers, too.

—Farnham Scott

DARBY O'GILL

AND THE LITTLE PEOPLE

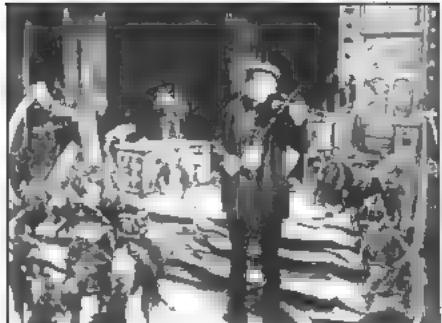
Walt Disney Home Video—\$19.99

Thankfully sparing audiences another in a string of bare-bones DVD releases, Disney does right by its *DARBY O'GILL AND THE LITTLE PEOPLE* one-disc edition, which includes Sean Connery himself reminiscing about one of his first major Hollywood roles. Long a favorite with Disney fans and Leprechaun lovers—and one of those Disney films with moments of genuine horror—the 1959 classic boasts a beautifully restored print revealing lush green Technicolor fields and authentic Irish accents later lost in redubbing after American audiences complained that they couldn't understand the soundtrack dialogue.

An all-too-brief but charming interview and retrospective of Sean Connery's early career offers the Oscar winner's take on the film; younger members of Disney's PR department no doubt were surprised to hear that Connery genuinely remembers and likes his pre-007 work with Walt. The actor recalls how the Irish-Scotch cast took over a San Bernardino hotel during filming and notes that fans fondly like to mention his *DARBY* role and his singing duet with costar Janet Munro. The bonus feature also offers rarely seen photos from the film's Dublin premiere, as well as several shirtless publicity shots of Connery during production.

Other bonus features include one of the better episodes of Disney's Sunday

night weekly anthology series, the behind-the-scenes, "I Captured The King of the Leprechauns," in which Walt and Pat O'Brien discuss Irish legend and lore. Another extra examines the film's extraordinary pre CGI special effects, revealing the secret of how studio wizards made stars Albert Sharpe and Jimmy O'Dea appear so big and little



opposite each other. Liner notes even note that this release respects the film's original aspect ratio, making it a suitable pot of collectible gold for DARBY and Disney DVD enthusiasts everywhere.

—Jim Holtfield

EYES WITHOUT A FACE

The Criterion Collection—\$29.95

During its initial release, *EYES WITHOUT A FACE* (1959) quickly grew notorious for its stomach-churning gore. When it was shown at the Edinburgh Film Festival, seven viewers fainted, prompting director Georges Franju to quip, "Now I know why Scotsmen wear skirts!"

This movie has lost none of its power to make viewers squirm. Yet, its most striking attribute remains its sensitivity—it sometimes poetic visuals and the empathy it grants its emotionally and physically damaged characters. Few horror movies are this brutal, or this gentle.

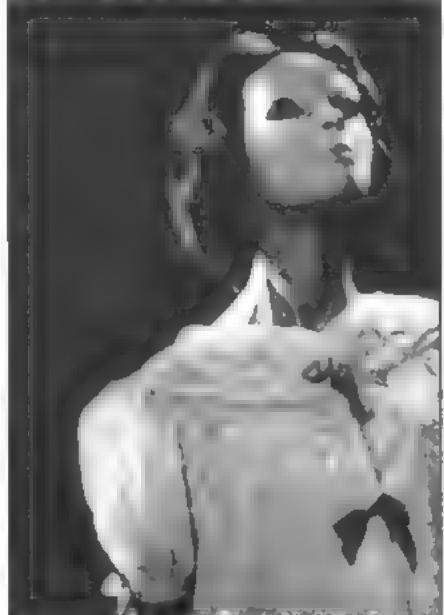
The story is straightforward, even shopworn. Dr. Genessier (Pierre Brasseur) and his assistant, Louise (Aldia Valk), undertake a series of desperate, secret medical experiments to try to restore the face of his daughter, Christiane (Edith Stob), who was disfigured in a car crash. In the film's most notorious scene, Genessier uses a scalpel and forceps to peel away the skin from his still-living subject's face. Christiane wears a mask Genessier has crafted in the likeness of her own, lost face. The expressionless mask lends her the unsettling appearance of an animated mannequin.

The beauty of *EYES WITHOUT A FACE* lies not in the tale, but in the telling. And the closer you examine it, the better it gets. Franju scandalized the French film community 10 years earlier with his slaughterhouse documentary *BLOOD OF THE BEASTS* (1949, included as a bonus feature on this DVD), which juxtaposed footage of animals being butchered with scenes of children at play. He uses a similar device in *EYES*, by placing the graphic medical sequences adjacent to introspective, character-focused scenes. A more conven-

tional film would portray Genessier as a heartless maniac and Christiane as a helpless pure-heart, but the central characters of *EYES* have complex motivations and suffer inner turmoil. Franju also makes masterful use of music and natural sound, and composes every frame with painterly care.

The Criterion Collection's Special Edition DVD ranks among the finest horror discs in recent memory. Transferred from a fully restored fine-grain 35mm source print, the film is presented in its entirety (including moments which were edited or deleted for the film's American release) with rich, luminous gray scale and razor-sharp focus. The picture is virtually blemish-free and the mono sound is pin-drop clear.

Aside from the superb *BLOOD OF THE BEASTS*, Criterion includes a host of other impressive supplements, including interviews with Franju and with screenwriters Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac, a stills gallery, and the original French and American theatrical trailers. The Stateside trailer is a special treat because it also features footage of *THE MANSTER* (1962), with which *EYES* was released on a double bill.



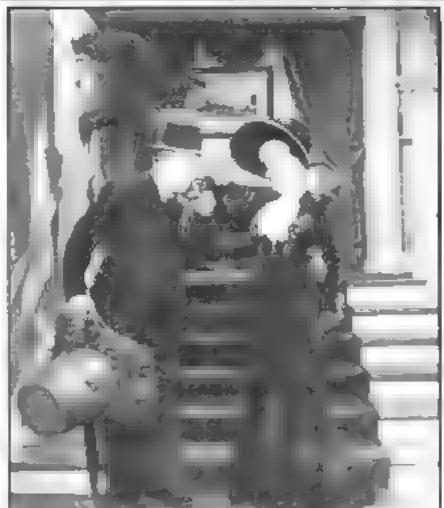
Along with Henri-Georges Clouzot's *L'ISLE DIABOLIQUE* (1955) and Alfred Hitchcock's *PSYCHO* (1960), *EYES WITHOUT A FACE* profoundly influenced the ensuing generation of European horror movies. Too often, however, its imitators duplicate only the copious gore of *EYES*, never realizing that what made the film special was the beauty that accompanied its ugliness.

Mark Clark

W. C. FIELDS COMEDY COLLECTION

Universal Home Video—\$59.95

This five-disc boxed set arrives in the nick of time. Hemmed in on one side by self-righteous conservatism and on the other by repressive political correctness, America needs W. C. Fields more



than ever. Fields crashed through those sorts of barriers, never allowing niceties like the production code to separate him from a good joke. Like the invisible monster in *FORBIDDEN PLANET* (1956), he was a rampaging id, saying and doing things most of us only think about. As a result, his films seem as fresh and relevant today as they did 60-plus years ago. Maybe more so.

INTERNATIONAL HOUSE (1933) casts Fields as an iconoclastic inventor who pilots his autogyro to China for the unveiling of another scientist's latest breakthrough—television! *IT'S A GIFT* (1934) features Fields as a struggling family man who, despite the protests of his shrewish wife (Kathleen Howard), sells his New Jersey grocery store and buys a California orange grove. In *YOU CAN'T CHEAT AN HONEST MAN* (1939), Fields plays Larsen E. Whipsnade, the shady proprietor of a circus, who attempts to arrange a marriage of convenience involving his daughter (Constance Moore). The circus ventriloquist Edgar Bergen) and his wooden sidekick (Charlie McCarthy) intervene. *MY LITTLE CHICKADEE* (1940) pairs Fields with another comedic force of nature Mae West. He plays a film-flam man who becomes entangled with a masked bandit and gets duped into a phony marriage with you-know-who. In *THE BANK DICK* (1940), he's a henpecked husband who lands a job as a security guard after he lies about apprehending a bank robber.

In a Fields movie, the plot is beside the point. His films are collections of perfectly constructed sequences, which often operate like short films unto themselves. For instance—the legendary porch scene in *IT'S A GIFT*, in which all manner of mishaps befall Fields as he tries to sleep on his back porch swing, or his "wedding night" with West in *CHICKADEE*, or the frenetic car chase that concludes *THE BANK DICK*.

At first glance, this boxed set seems an odd assortment, since it omits some of Fields' funniest efforts, such as *YOU'RE TELLING ME* (1934), *THE MAN ON THE FLYING TRAPEZE* (1935), and

NEVER GIVE A SUCKER AN EVEN BREAK (1941). Closer inspection reveals the logic behind Universal's choices. Fields reworked and refined certain gags and scenarios throughout his career, and this carefully calibrated collection de-emphasizes the inevitable repetition and maximizes the laughs.

The presentation of all five films is, across the board, excellent, in terms of picture and sound quality. The transfer of THE BANK DICK is comparable to the now out of print Criterion Collection DVD. About the only disappointment is the dearth of supplemental materials—few trailers and no commentaries or other value-added content. That's too bad, especially since there's a wealth of high-quality Fields material out there. The fine documentary W.C. FIELDS STRAIGHT UP would have made a superb addition.

Here's hoping Universal isn't finished with Fields. Plenty of great material remains for a Volume Two—not just the titles already mentioned, but also such outstanding pictures as THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY (1934) and POPPY (1936), with a selection of Fields shorts, perhaps. And how about a MAE WEST COMEDY COLLECTION?

—Mark Clark

LI'L ABNER

Paramount Home Video—\$14.99

My most wanted DVD has just come out and I am in Dogpatch heaven. I first saw LI'L ABNER at the beautiful Western Theater in Los Angeles in 1959. I fell in love with it then and there, and it has remained one of my favorites ever since. While the film did very well during its release, until recently it seems to have been mostly forgotten. There are a variety of reasons for this. Its stagy quality. No big hit songs. The fact that some perceive it as dated. However, in the last decade the tide has turned and others have come out of the woodwork and rediscovered LI'L ABNER.

Thanks to Al Capp, Li'l Abner started life in the thirties, and became one of the most beloved comic strips in history. It was turned into a hit Broadway musical in 1956, with a book by Norman Panama and Melvin Frank, a score by Gene de Paul and Johnny Mercer, and direction and choreography by Michael Kidd. Since Paramount Pictures was a major investor, it was pretty much a given that there would be a film version, and indeed Panama and Frank gave it to us in glorious Technicolor and VistaVision.

It's a mostly faithful rendering of the Broadway show, albeit with some altered lyrics (for the better) and some song deletions. A couple of verses of "It's a Typical Day" are missing, most of "If I Had My Druthers" and "Rag Offen The Bush" are gone, "The Country's in the Very Best of Hands" is missing a verse or two, and "The Matrimonial Stomp" is missing its entire middle section. Completely gone are "Unnecessary

Town," "Oh, Happy Day," "Love in a Home," and "Progress is the Root of All Evil." There is a new ballad—"Otherwise" for Abner and Daisy Mae late in the film.

Happily, most of the Broadway cast returned for the film, so we get the definitive performances of Peter Palmer (Abner), Stubby Kaye (Marryin' Sam), Billie Hayes (who replaced Charlotte Rae on Broadway as Mammy Yokum), Joe E. Marks (Pappy Yokum), Bern Hoffman (Earthquake McGoon), Carmen Alvarez (Moonbeam McSwine), Howard St. John (General Bullmoose), Julie Newmar (Stupefyin' Jones), William Lanteau (Avail-

will be a revelation. Gone is the yellow, hazy, ugly full-frame image, replaced by a mostly glorious, colorful transfer that really shows off the VistaVision framing and sharpness. A handful of shots are out of registration and exhibit fringing, but that is a minor caveat. Sound is mono. I am not going to mince words—go out and buy this DVD today. Don't think twice. I haz spoken.

Bruce Kimmel

THE MAN WHO LAUGHS

Kino on Video—\$29.95

At last the best Hollywood silent horror film is available on home video! Paul Leni's adaptation of Victor Hugo's 1869 novel *The Man Who Laughs* is the third of Universal's "Parisian" trilogy.

As with THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME (1923) and THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA (1925), both of which preceded it, THE MAN WHO LAUGHS (1928) was initially conceived as a star vehicle for Lon Chaney; in fact, it was slated to precede the latter into production. It may be fortunate that the film was delayed, since the result was that German emigre Paul Leni directed rather than the likes of Rupert Julian or Wallace Worsley. The results are nothing less than spectacular.

The film also ended up with Conrad Veidt in the title role, which may have been a mixed blessing. Certainly Chaney would have invented one of his typically spectacular makeups and his participation would likely have increased interest in the film in the years since its release, but it's difficult to imagine Chaney creating a performance as subtle and multilayered as Veidt's. (With Chaney, too, what might have resulted was a star vehicle rather than the reasonably faithful, ensemble adaptation that made it to the screen.) With his mouth fixed in a permanent grin, Veidt conveys everything with his eyes and body language.

Like its predecessors, LAUGHS was a Super-Jewel production and scads of money went into faithful landmark recreations, in this case the House of Lords and Southwark Fair. Still, the most intriguing sets might be the imagined ones, such as the King's bedroom where, echoing his false piety, icons



able Jones), Ted Thurston (Senator Jack S. Phogbound), Stanley Simmonds (Rasmussen T. Finsdale), Al Nesor (Evil Eye Fleagle), and many of the ensemble. Replacing Edie Adams as Daisy Mae was the beautiful and wonderful Leslie Parrish. Despite the fact that her singing voice is dubbed, they could not have found a more perfect Daisy. (I can't imagine that I was the only young boy who fell madly in love with her.) Replacing Broadway's Tina Louise was smart and sassy Stella Stevens as Appassionata Von Climax), and again, one can't imagine a better performance. Sharp-eyed viewers will notice two future TV stars in the Dogpatch ensemble: Valerie Harper (Rhoda on THE MARY TYLER MOORE SHOW), and Beth Howland (Vera on ALICE).

All the humor is intact, and it hasn't dated one whit. Listen to "The Country's in the Very Best of Hands" and tell me what's dated about it. The sad fact is, it's more on target than ever. The dialogue is filled with classic Panama and Frank wordplay. The Michael Kidd choreography is here replicated by Deedee Wood, who, along with husband Mark Breaux (also in the film), would go on to choreograph MARY POPPINS (1964). And the score remains classic.

For those who've only seen LI'L ABNER on VHS, the transfer on the DVD



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mask the passage to the torture chamber. It is Leni's direction of the film, spell bindingly telling the story with the camera rather than a plethora of title cards, that makes LAUGHS his masterpiece and a must-see for any genre fan. What a pity Leni died after making only one more film. As added incentive, the film also marks Jack Pierce's first makeup assignment for Universal. That plus the art direction and stylish camerawork make LAUGHS, more than PHANTOM, the real precursor to the studio's Golden Age of Horrors.

Kno's release includes a 20-minute documentary on the making of the film and an excellent essay by Veidt chronicler John Soister.

—Harry H. Long

NIGHT GALLERY

Universal Home Video—\$59.98

Five years after CBS' cancellation of THE TWILIGHT ZONE, NBC offered Rod Serling a return to a regular network series. After the success of the two-hour NIGHT GALLERY pilot in 1969, the series was picked up. It aired, in its first season, as part of a rotating block of shows, FOUR IN ONE, containing two to four stories per episode. Airing only once a month, the season consisted of only six hour-long episodes. For the second season, GALLERY had its own time slot and a full run of 22 episodes.

Falling ratings caused NBC to cut the program to half an hour, axing it after

15 episodes. After that it became impossible to see the show in its original form. The 28 hour episodes were recut (some stories losing footage, others gaining) for a half-hour syndication package. During the nineties, restored episodes aired on the Mystery Network, and now the first restored season is available in a three-disc set from Universal.

Focusing more on tales of horror and the supernatural than the sci-fi leanings of TZ—and with less social commentary—GALLERY is far less appreciated than its predecessor. Overall, GALLERY has roughly the same proportion of good, average, and awful episodes as the ZONE. Serling also unfairly received the brunt of the (often deserved) negative criticism, even though his involvement didn't stretch past hosting and occasional writing.

Disc One opens, sensibly, with the pilot, which consists of three stories. "The Cemetery" stars Roddy McDowall as a greedy man who hastens the demise of his uncle (George McReady). He then tries to convince the uncle's butler (Ossie Davis) that the painting of the estate's cemetery keeps changing—hinting that uncle is out for revenge. "Eyes" is directed by a young upstart named Steven Spielberg and stars Joan Crawford as a nasty blind woman who buys the eyes off a desperately poor man (Tom Bosley) so she can have sight for 12 hours. The final tale, "Escape Route," tells of an ex Nazi (Richard

Kiley) trying to avoid retribution for war crimes. While all three stories are well acted and directed and contain some effective moments, they don't hold up particularly well today. Luckily, several of the first season's stories do.

The first regular episode, "The Dead Man," is a good example. It stars Carl Betz as a doctor who hypnotizes a handsome young subject (Michael Blodgett) into exhibiting the symptoms of serious illnesses—and even death. (Rare for TV of the time, "The Dead Man" contains some intriguing gay subtext.) Another effective episode is "Certain Shadows on the Wall," starring Agnes Moorehead, Grayson Hall, Louis Hayward, and Rachel Roberts as siblings living in the same house. Stephen Brigham (Hayward) is intentionally neglect-



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ful and causes the death of sister Emma (Moorehead). He wishes to sell the house, but Emma's shadow appears on the living-room wall to taunt and haunt him. In "The Doll," Colonel Masters (John Williams) receives a rather sinister do-l as payment for services rendered when he was an officer stationed in Colonial India. The season ended with one of Serrling's finest hours—the Emmy-nominated "They're Tearing Down Tim Riley's Bar." It stars William Windom as an aging plastic salesman on his way out, who retreats into a fantasy world of long-departed family and friends. A touch too sentimental, the episode is still a stunning portrayal of a broken man, marred only by a treacly coda imposed by the network.

Apart from minor dust, debris, and occasional scratches, the DVD transfers look very nice and are a major improvement over the shabby syndicated prints. Picture quality is sharp and detailed, with deep blacks and rich colors. The mono audio is as good as it gets for a 25-year-old program. Sadly, in spite of an abundance of material, the only extras are three bonus episodes. Still, the set should please all but the most perfectionist of GALLERY fans. Here's hoping that Universal gives us Season Two, with extras, in short order.

—Ron Morgan

BUNNY LAKE IS MISSING

Columbia TriStar Home Video—\$19.94
Bunny Lake is missing—if she even existed. Otto Preminger's 1965 film grippingly presents a noirish thriller in which the titular character may be a mere figment of her mother's imagination.

Bunny is—possibly—the four-year-old illegitimate daughter of Ann Lake (Carol Lynley), a recent émigré to Lon-



don. Ann drops her daughter off at the nursery school, only to discover that Bunny is nowhere to be found when the time comes to pick her up. Not only has Bunny disappeared, but no one in the school (parents, teachers, cooks) has any memory of Bunny ever being there. A single mother's worse nightmare come true becomes ever more freakish as Ann's quest to find Bunny progresses. Leading the search is police Superintendent Newhouse (Laurence Olivier, in a richly textured performance) who clearly doubts the existence of Bunny.

Many of Britain's greatest character actors pop up either to help or hinder the investigation. Martita Hunt is simply grand as the school's former headmistress, Anna Massey registers as the impervious school secretary, Clive Revill is fine as Olivier's frazzled assistant, and Finlay Curry delivers chills as a dollmaker who may or may not prove the child's actuality. Sir Noel Coward provides much needed humor with his turn as the boozy, poetry-spouting landlord with a penchant for sexual ambiguities. However, the film truly belongs to Lynley, delivering on the acting promise of *BLUE DENIM* (1959). This distraught, distracted, and gutsy maternal character is quite possibly her best film work. Lynley holds her own against every other cast member. There is rarely a moment that she's not onscreen, taking the viewer with her on her nerve-wracking search.

The film's only weakness is Keir Dullea, whose performance as Ann's brother provided Coward with the quip, "Keir Dullea, gone tomorrow." Adapted from Evelyn Piper's 1957 pulp novel, the film tackles, with dignity and intelligence, such taboo topics as abortion, lesbianism, sadomasochism (Sir Noel is certainly not a kitten with a whip), and incest. Notably, the novel does not feature a brother for its heroine or a London setting, but the film's chilling set piece at the doll maker's is also one of the novel's finest chapters.

One of the last black-and-white films shot in CinemaScope, Columbia TriStar has released a simply stunning DVD presentation, perfectly capturing the widescreen pleasures of Preminger's direction. The only feature on the disc is a trailer for the Julianne Moore film *THE FORGOTTEN* (2005), which bears only a slight resemblance to *BUNNY LAKE IS MISSING*.

—Anthony Dale

COLUMBO (Seasons One and Two)

Universal Home Video—\$39.98 each
To some, it's just another seventies cop show, but to its diehard fans *COLUMBO* represents television's greatest contribution to the mystery genre. Peter Falk has played the beguiling, infuriating policeman on and off for 35 years—there are rumors that he may not be finished yet—so the release of the first two seasons on DVD is long overdue.

The show's reverse-whodunit formula, in which we see the killer commit an apparently perfect murder, only to wind up being pursued by the dogged and disheveled Columbo, is as much a trademark of the show as the Lieutenant's scruffy raincoat, so it's a surprise to see that so few episodes in the first season stick rigidly to that format. It's as though the makers feared that audiences might soon tire of it.

Picture transfer is reasonably crisp if, like Anakin Skywalker's upbringing, a little on the dark side. Like most Uni-



versal releases of shows from the seventies and eighties, extras are nonexistent. This isn't to say that it would be impossible to provide any; commentaries by Falk or the writers and directors would have been welcome, or even—dream of dreams—the 1968 episode of *THE CHEVY MYSTERY SHOW* entitled "Enough Rope," starring Bert Freed as Columbo and Richard Carlson as the killer. (Yes, it does still exist.)

The Season One set claims to be doing us a great favor by including the show's pilot episodes, *PREScription-MURDER* and *RANSOM FOR A DEAD MAN*. *PREScription* isn't really a pilot—it was a one-off TV movie made in 1968, three years before the series proper. In terms of style and tone, it couldn't be more different from the show it spawned. Falk (looking disarmingly like Jack Lemmon) is an unexpectedly ruthless Columbo, who yells at a female suspect and rarely wears his famous but pointless raincoat. *PREScription* and *RANSOM* are the cream of the crop when it comes to ingenious plotting and playful exchanges between the Lieutenant and his quarry. They far surpass *MURDER BY THE BOOK*, which is chiefly remembered for its director, a young Steven Spielberg.

The second season is more like the *COLUMBO* we all remember. Highlights include *ETUDE IN BLACK*, the only entry to feature Falk's friend and big-screen collaborator John Cassavetes, and *DAGGER OF THE MIND*, which sees the good Lieutenant visiting London and becoming embroiled in a crime committed by a couple of famous actors (Richard Basehart and Honor Blackman) obviously based on Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor. The plot of *DAGGER* is not one of the series' strongest, and Hollywood's notion of seventies England is painfully embarrassing, but it's noteworthy because, for once, the production team actually went to London, and so the episode is littered with shots of Falk visiting famous landmarks.

Once again, alas, there are no extras, not even the 70-minute cut of *ETUDE* that aired in Canada, and that's generally agreed to be superior to the 90-minute version we get here. It's attention to little details like these that might have turned good DVDs of a great show into great DVDs of a great show.

—M. J. Elliott

BATMAN AND ROBIN

Columbia TriStar Home Video—\$29.95
Neither as grim as Tim Burton's two Batfeatures or as campy as either Adam West's TV show or Joel Schumacher's duo of movies, 1949's BATMAN AND ROBIN is probably the most fun film version of the dynamic duo to date.

The plot has mystery villain The Wizard stealing a remote control device with which he can stop all traffic in Gotham City. Commissioner Gordon calls on the Dynamic Duo to retrieve the machine and discover the Wizard's identity. Fifteen chapters of edge-of-your-seat cliffhanger action ensue. We're given several good suspects for the Wizard's identity, including a radio news reporter, a private eye, and the inventor of the remote control device—who is not as crippled as he seems.

As with most cliffhangers of the period, there are fistfights aplenty and some fairly impressive stunt work. And while it is true that there's plenty of cheesy things, too—look for Robin's bald stunt double—the serial moves at a rapid enough pace to hold anyone's attention. This film is nowhere near as bad as its reputation has suggested.

The cast is quite good. Robert Lowery and Johnny Duncan make for an excellent Batman and Robin. Lowery is believable and tough enough to be Batman. Duncan is neither the punk nor the wimp of later Boy Wonders. Character actor Lyle Talbot—who went on to play the first screen incarnation of Lex Luthor in ATOM MAN VS. SUPERMAN (1950)—plays Commissioner Gordon and is as fun to watch as Gordon as he was as Luthor. Universal Horror buffs will recognize Jane Adams (1945's HOUSE OF DRACULA) as Vicki Vale. There's a host



of other character and serial actors in the film, including future Lone Ranger John Hart.

The first serial released to DVD by the company that originally made it, BATMAN AND ROBIN looks fantastic. Columbia has done a nice job transferring the movie from the original negative

and has even restored 10 minutes that were missing from their previous VHS edition. The only negative aspect is the lack of genuine extras. We're given previews for SPIDER MAN 2 (2004) and HELLBOY (2004), but nothing directly related to the serial itself. Now if they'd just release the 1943 Batman serial!

—T. J. Moore

THE CREEPING FLESH

Columbia TriStar Home Video—\$24.95
As Gothic horror films began winding down in the early 1970s, the genre managed a few last gasps that include its finest accomplishments. THE CREEPING FLESH (1973) is a complex offering incorporating post-modern references—long before SCREAM (1996)—to a host of horror films and other sources. Chief is the casting of Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee as rival scientist brothers. The film is further stuffed with visual references to everything from CALIGARI (1919) to director Freddie Francis' own THE SKULL (1965).

The intricate plot involves Cushing's discovery of an ancient skeleton; exposure to water causes flesh to begin recomposing on the bones. Canny horror observers will be expecting Lovecraft or Kneale explorations and the resurrection of the creature. Neither expectation is fully realized, because the fossil is essentially a McGuffin allowing Peter Spenceley and Jonathan Rumbold's script to strike out in a variety of unexpected directions. FLESH is an exploration of an extremely dysfunctional family, subversively couched in situations and images familiar to genre fans.

That the references are deliberate, not a collection of clichés, can be detected by the names of the principal characters; Emmanuel (Cushing) and his half-brother James (Lee) are biblical allusions, while the name of Emmanuel's daughter—Penelope (Lorna Heilbron)—is derived from Homer. Such care in selecting apt character names indicates other similes are also intentional.

Surprisingly Francis, who professed himself no fan of horror movies, assembled a comprehensive grabbag of visual swipes. Cushing and Lee are cast according to type, a move obscuring the early realization that the brothers are equally blind to concerns other than their own. While James heartlessly experiments on the psychiatric patients in his care, Emmanuel blithely injects his own daughter with an experimental drug. Emmanuel's act may even be the more monstrous, since his deed is prompted by a suffocating desire to halt her maturation masked by professions of paternal love—or possibly incestuous desire. If the monster walks but briefly and to little effect, there are more than enough human monsters to go around.

Lee is solid in a performance that asks little of him, while Cushing is splendid in a role that takes him from distract-



but authoritarian to fragile, emotional wreckage. Copping the acting honors, however, is Heilbron as the obedient, virginal daughter transformed into a gleefully homicidal maniac.

Appropriately the DVD defines barebones—there isn't even a trailer—but the film is presented widescreen and from a fairly good source.

—Harry H. Long

ALADDIN

Walt Disney Home Video—\$29.99

The first animated film to pass the \$200-million box office mark, ALADDIN's two-disc, digitally restored DVD release is bound to make a few viewers wonder just how traditionally animated musicals could fall so out of favor at Disney in such a short period of time. Following THE LITTLE MERMAID (1989) and BEAUTY AND THE BEAST (1991), this 1992 diamond in the rough still shines brightly, aided by the Oscar-winning Alan Menken and Howard Ashman music, the jaw-dropping vocal performance by another Oscar winner, Robin Williams, and some of the most frenetically inspired animation ever produced at Disney.

Documentaries, deleted scenes, musical material, and pop-up factoids offer hours of bonus viewing. Additional features provide looks at the inspirational art of Al Hirschfeld, animator Glen Keane, recording sessions, and voice cast member interviews. A 20-minute examination of composer Menken's work is almost bittersweet, reminding viewers how Disney revived the film musical so spectacularly just a decade or so ago. Given that the studio has largely abandoned traditional animation and the musical format in favor of non-singing, computer-animated fare, the inclusion of music videos by Jessica Simpson, Nick Lachey, and Clay Aiken seems rather odd. Listening to a new generation perform songs from ALADDIN begs the



observation that there must be some inspiration remaining to be found in hand-drawn, musical animation. Here's hoping Disney rediscovers its creative cave of wonders and the talent that produced the studio's Golden Renaissance of the last decade. ALADDIN's DVD release serves as a brilliant reminder of what current audiences are missing.

—Jim Hohfield

LOST IN SPACE 20th Century Fox Home Video

Season One—\$79.98

Season Two Volumes 1 and 2—\$39.98

Season Three Volume 1—\$39.98

Season Three Volume 2—\$29.98

The DVD industry has finally reached its pinnacle; we need not desire any further titles to hit the market: the entire run of *LOST IN SPACE* is now available.

Irwin Allen's sci-fi family series ran on CBS from 1965 to 1968. Despite its many failings and childish simplicities,



it's just about the most goofily sublime, subversively "out there" program in the history of prime time broadcasting. It may have been dopey but, unlike other shows that tried to be logical and literate, it was never boring. The DVD set finally lets fans see all of those random moments that were trimmed in favor of commercial time for syndication (most distressingly Billy Mumy's rendition of "Sloop John B" from "Castles in Space"). What's more, we're treated again to those cliffhanger title cards from Seasons One and Two that slid onto the screen to tell you to tune in next week. (For the most part these have been unavailable since the original airings.) The extras even include those quickie network "bumpers" that would tell you "*LOST IN SPACE*, brought to you by..."

Fox Home video offers Season One (the black-and-white episodes) in a single package, with Seasons Two and Three

each split into two separate boxes. The episodes are chronological and in very good shape, but there are, regrettably, no booklets, no commentary, and nothing as tantalizing as outtakes or deleted scenes. The first set includes the original unaired pilot, "No Place to Hide," which was later stretched into the first five episodes of the premiere season. Neither two-faced Dr. Zachary Smith (Jonathan Harris) nor that "Bubble-Headed Booby," the Robot (enacted by Bob May, voiced by Dick Tufeld), are anywhere to be seen, the pilot giving fans an idea of where the series might have headed without them. The first year of *LOST IN SPACE* was full of men in weird monster suits (usually played by Dawson Palmer) and all kinds of lapses in plausibility, but its tone wasn't deliberately silly. The season included the only two-part offering, "The Keeper" (played by Klaatu himself, Michael Rennie); those creepy pale-white aliens with no mouths ("Invaders from the 5th Dimension"); the introduction to everybody's favorite space monkey, Debbie the Bloop; and some effective "message" episodes ("Wish Upon a Star" and "All That Glitters") that (temporarily) taught the greedy Dr. Smith the error of his ways. There were early hints that a romance was to blossom between Major Don West (Mark Goddard) and Judy Robinson (Marta Kristen), but the show got pretty sexless after these initial stirrings—even though it was always questionable why Dr. Smith would pull young Will Robinson so close to him whenever danger was near.

Things shifted considerably by the second season (probably the least enjoyable of the three), when Allen and his team of writers decided to throw all restraints to the winds and take the show into unexpected realms of jaw-dropping camp. The program had basically become the Smith/Will/Robot show, with top-billed Guy Williams (John Robinson) relegated to supporting "straight man" (his best chance would come in the intriguing "The Anti-Matter Man" from season three, in which, playing a dual role, he got to show a nasty side), while second-billed June Lockhart (Maureen Robinson) was kept around mostly to say "Oh, John" in a distressed voice. (Lockhart was the only cast member to never have an entire episode built around her.) There were Space Vikings, Space Buccaneers, Space Werewolves, Space Scotsmen, Space Toymakers, Space Hippies, Space Cowboys, and, most threatening of all, a bad-tempered, talking Space Carrot. The Robinson family visited a planet of groovy kids who were obliged to dance to rock music at the sound of a siren ("The Promised Planet"); participated in a beauty pageant for which the Robot was adorned with a feather boa;

saw their space ship, the Jupiter 2, turned into a vacation resort, dealt with Will being transformed into a miniature Dr. Smith clone (complete with a Jonathan Harris mask); and somehow never could find their way back to Earth to stay, even though they made it there a few times for "stopovers," by accident.

There were some nicely accomplished special effects (the frequent sight of the Jupiter 2 approaching a planet's orbit was one of the show's best visual stock shots), memorable hardware like the Chariot and the Space Pod, and not one but two terrific opening themes by Johnny Williams. It was—and still is—great fun if you're in the mood for this sort of colorful nonsense, and somehow it's all too fitting that the final episode took place in a junkyard.

Barry Monush

Y TU MAMA TAMBIEN

MGM/UA Home Video—\$14.95

Following two English language films, director Alfonso Cuarón returned to Mexico to make the brilliant, challenging, and unorthodox *Y TU MAMA TAMBIEN* (2001)—in part, obviously, because *Y TU MAMA TAMBIEN* (AND YOUR MOTHER, TOO) is the sort of movie that wouldn't and couldn't be made in Hollywood. It's too bold, too openly and honestly sexual. The film also clearly requires its Mexican setting in order to work. Though never stressed, the story is almost as political as it is sexual, taking place in a land where dire poverty rests side-by-side with comfortable wealth, where roadblocks and quixotic car-searches are an expected "annoyance," where a much more visible class structure than we have in America controls much of what happens.

Julio (Gael García Bernal) and Tenoch (Diego Luna) are two close pals whose girlfriends are away for the summer on a trip to Italy. Their lives are marvelously unstructured. They spend their time drinking, doping, hoping to "get lucky" (it rarely happens), and kvetching about what they want to do with their lives versus what their parents want them to do. All this changes when they meet Luisa (Maribel Verdú). Tenoch's distant cousin by marriage, at a wed-

Continued on page 36





The War of the Marples

by M J Elliott

When it was announced in November 2003 that David Suchet's *POIROT* had been resurrected for a second time and that a slew of fresh Agatha Christie adaptations were to come, the possibility of a new series of Miss Marple adaptations was treated as little more than a footnote by the press. What was the need? Between 1984 and 1992, the BBC had filmed the entire canon for a loving and faithful series starring Joan Hickson (pictured Bottom Right). Twenty-one years later, the shows were still ratings-winners, and the late star could be described with some justification as the perfect Miss Marple, having been Agatha Christie's preferred actress. As such, Joan Hickson and Raymond Burr—who was selected to play Perry Mason by author Erle Stanley Gardner—occupy a special place in the mystery world.

But a new series was an inevitability, and within a few months the newspapers began the speculation game. Who would play the new Jane Marple? "Miss Marple is a classic that deserves to be reinterpreted by a new generation. Luckily in Britain, there is no dearth of old, posh actresses," declared John Whiston, Head of Drama at production company Granada. This disquieting lack of discrimination was the first sign of trouble ahead.

An early favorite for the part was Prunella Scales, alias Basil Fawlty's shrewish wife Sybil, but also famous in Britain for portraying an elderly busybody in a phenomenally successful series of commercials for a supermarket chain. Maggie Smith—who had already appeared in two of

Peter Ustinov's Poirot features, *DEATH ON THE NILE* (1978) and *EVIL UNDER THE SUN* (1982)—was another likely candidate. The guessing game came to an end in May 2004, with the casting of Prunella Scales' *MAPP AND LUCIA* costar, 72-year-old Geraldine McEwan (pictured Top Left). Producer Matthew Read gushed: "Geraldine has all the qualities we were looking for in our new Miss Marple. She can mix sweetness with steel and is one of our nation's most respected and watchable actresses."

McEwan was equally enthusiastic about the character she was to portray. "I love her. I love Miss Marple. And when I was asked to play her I just felt it was—well, it sounds a bit dramatic—but I thought it really was right that I was asked to play this part. I felt it was my destiny, really. She's a very independent, self-sufficient person, who lives very much for the moment. She's totally herself and doesn't care about extraneous things such as how she looks or what people's opinion of her are; they just don't come into her consciousness. She enjoys every minute of her existence and is not worried about getting old—she lives in the present. This is what makes her so fascinating and endearing. She has an avid curiosity about people, and is very interested in their lives—she's not really nosy, just curious. And she's very entertained by people. She has a razor sharp mind, a high intelligence, and is very witty. I envy her capacity to live her life to the full. The idea that she goes through her life solving crimes, one after the other, is very funny."

McEwan's passion was let down somewhat by her remarks concerning the research she had undertaken in preparation for the series. "When I was asked to do this, it was such a big assignment, so I didn't have time to read a lot of the books," she admitted. "I did read one, which is set in the Caribbean." Alas, *A Caribbean Mystery* (published in 1964) does not appear in this first clutch of dramas.

Whatever the misgivings about remakes, the knowledge that the films were being made by the people behind *POIROT*, and that they were to star one of Britain's finest actresses appearing alongside a gaggle of stars could only serve as an assurance that a high-quality product would result.

The decision to entitle the series *AGATHA CHRISTIE'S MARPLE* was an unsettling one. Yes, Poirot might be known by his surname only, but to refer to St. Mary Mead's most famous inhabitant simply as "Marple" seems somehow impolite. (The show was retitled *AGATHA CHRISTIE'S MISS MARPLE* in the States.)

The new series began on December 12, 2004, just as the Joan Hickson series had 20 years before, with *THE BODY IN THE LIBRARY*, scripted by *POIROT*'s Kevin Elyaf and directed by Andy Wilson, who had previously helmed Elyaf's television of *DEATH ON THE NILE* (2004). That the result is, to say the least, uneven is due in no small part to the casting. As Dolly Bantry, Joanna Lumley plays up to her *ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS* screen persona (when she would surely have been better cast as Bess Sedgwick in an adaptation of the 1965 novel *At Bertram's Hotel*), Simon Callow and Jack Davenport overact furiously as the detectives on the case, James Fox plays Colonel Bantry as though in training for Lord Emsworth, and Jamie Theakston—a TV presenter-turned actor—looks very much like a TV presenter-turned actor. Any production in which the likes of Geraldine McEwan

Continued
on page 34



THE WAR OF THE MARPLES

Continued from page 33

and Ian Richardson fail to make any impression on the viewer in trouble.

Andy Wilson explained his approach to the project. "People have said 'Why do this again? The Joan Hicksons were so good.' But look, they're 20-something years old, now, and they've got a bunch of actors who are now septuagenarians or no longer with us. This audience, our audience want to see the likes of David Walliams. They want to see Geraldine and they want to see all the new actors doing the story." The decision to cast such comedy actors as Walliams and Ben Miller in every episode yields mixed results. Neither manages to be either interesting or funny within the confines of the episode. (Miller's comedy partner Alexander Armstrong fares a little better in *A MURDER IS ANNOUNCED* by being merely dull.)

The decision to change the identity of the killer was a much-publicized deviation from the original plot, but one that Christie adaptations had suffered before. Tony Randall's hideous *THE ALPHABET MURDERS* (1965) being a prime candidate. On TV, Inspector Morse's cases rarely ended up looking like the books on which they were based. So is it really worth all this passion? Well, yes. *The Body in the Library* (1945), like the best of Christie's novels, is a carefully-structured house of cards. Start making crucial changes and you risk the whole thing collapsing. Is Kevin Elyot's solution better than Christie's? Hell, no. If the reason for making the change was the possibility that viewers might already know the solution, why not change the identity of the killer in all the stories? Surely *4.50 FROM PADDINGTON* (1957) and *A Murder is Announced* (1950) are the most familiar Miss Marple tales, both having been filmed three times.

Matters improved with *THE MURDER AT THE VICARAGE*, based upon the first Miss Marple novel (published in 1930) and scripted by Stephen Churchett, who also adapted the following week's *4.50 FROM PADDINGTON*. McEwan's personality—though not that of Miss Marple—shone through here as it had failed to do in the previous film. She and Stephen Tompkinson (as Inspector Slack, curiously absent from *THE BODY IN THE LIBRARY*) prove an entertaining pairing, and in director Charles Palmer's hands, the plot is as comprehensible as *THE BODY IN THE LIBRARY* was tedious and baffling.

Mark Gatiss, the obligatory comedy actor, does not seem at all out of place as Ronald Hawes. If one must find fault, it is perhaps that there are, if anything, too many guest stars. Because of their limited screen time, Jane Asher and Robert Powell fail to make much of an impression as Mrs. Lester and Dr. Hay-

dock, respectively. (A week later, Jenny Agutter dies a mere two minutes into *4.50 FROM PADDINGTON!*) Herbert Lom's Augustin Dufose cannot be found in the novel, but his addition creates no major problems, even though Christie felt her novel to be overpopulated. Why was *MURDER AT THE VICARAGE* not chosen as the first episode if it is so obviously superior to *THE BODY IN THE LIBRARY*? Well, nearly an hour passes before Colonel Protheroe (Derek Jacobi) goes to his fate, and this is one of the few Christie novels to feature only one murder. *THE BODY IN THE LIBRARY*, as its title suggests, presents us with a corpse right from the get-go.

Much had been made of the fact that the new series would feature spicy rev-

and in *4.50 FROM PADDINGTON*, as in Wilson's previous effort, the enjoyment remains defiantly offscreen. Wilson directs without any real attention to plot or character, as though he knows the audience is conversant with the story, so why not ignore it in favor of showing off the shiny new actors? This is the televisual equivalent of a post-it note.

Amanda Holden—more famous in the UK for her turbulent personal life than for her acting—is uninteresting in the all-important role of Lucy Eylesbarrow. And while John Hannah and Pam Ferris fit the roles of Inspector Campbell (Cradock in the novel) and Mrs. McGillicuddy perfectly, Charlie Creed-Mills is simply dreadful as Harold Crackenthorpe. Michael Landes, best-known (if at all) as the first Jimmy Olsen on *LOIS & CLARK*, plays an American Bryan Eastley, Welsh comic Rob Brydon is tiresome as a "humorous" railway official, while equally Welsh comedian Griff Rhys-Jones is excellent as Dr. Quimper. Geraldine McEwan has, by this stage, transformed into a thin Margaret Rutherford. The scene in which she accidentally walks onto the stage of a Noel Coward concert would not have looked out of place in *MURDER SHE SAID*. All in all, *4.50 FROM PADDINGTON* is a failure, but not nearly so disastrous as Wilson's other Marple.

The series ends on a high with *A MURDER IS ANNOUNCED*, directed by John Strickland. In some respects, this treatment (starring Cherie Lunghi, Zoe Wanamaker, and Elaine Paige) is preferable to the

BBC's version, which runs at nearly three hours—a bit much for a story that takes place almost entirely in one medium-sized house. Stewart Harcourt's screenplay gives McEwan an opportunity to emote, as she discovers one of the victims. "When I started working on the script I realized that there was a big sadness for her," said the actress, "but I didn't know how deep it was until we started filming. It's wonderful because it means as an actor, I am having the opportunity to experience all kinds of emotions which I didn't expect when I started out on this journey."

At the end of the journey, *MARPLE* is not a triumph, nor is it a disaster—two poor episodes and two good ones keep the scales even. But it's surprising that a show that seemed to promise so much could produce even one poor episode. Joanna Lumley says: "Miss Marple exists from now until eternity. They could put it in togas and Miss Marple would still work." I take leave to doubt that toga suggestion, but—like Andy Wilson's remarks—it does suggest the notion that the novels are somehow tamper-proof, and that anything can be done with them and audiences will still tune in. It's an attitude that shows little respect for both Agatha Christie and the viewers.



Margaret Rutherford played Miss Marple in four MGM comedy/mysteries of the sixties.

elations about Miss Marple's past. "She has loved and she has been loved, but she has chosen to end her days as Miss Marple," explained executive producer Damian Timmer. "Her lover is the most important character in her life. She has been involved in some situations that the old Miss Marple might be shocked by." In fact, *MURDER AT THE VICARAGE* subjects us to some sub-BRIEF ENCOUNTER sepia flashbacks featuring Julie Cox as a young Miss Marple breaking up with her married beau, Captain Ainsworth (Mark Warren)—and that's the last we learn of the matter, thank goodness.

Andy Wilson was in charge once again for *4.50 FROM PADDINGTON* (retitled *WHAT MRS. McGILLCUDDY SAW* in the States). This was to be the flagship episode, broadcast the day after Christmas and going head to head with Rupert Everett's debut as Sherlock Holmes on the BBC. Referring to his cast's propensity for mugging, Wilson explained: "They're all completely over the top and wildly outrageous. I encourage it. I laugh the whole day long. If you ever want a laugh to cheer you up, film an Agatha Christie story." It is not always the case that the audience will automatically enjoy a program simply because the makers had such a good time,

- WIN MISS MARPLE! DETAILS ON PAGE 66 -



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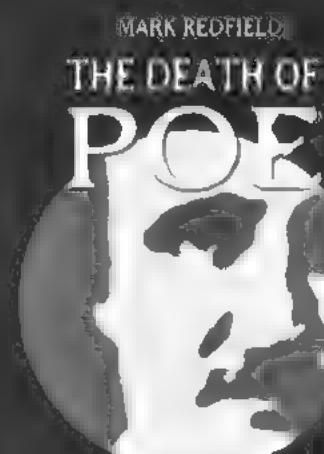
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SCREEN AND SCREEN AGAIN

Continued from page 32

Engaging in an adolescent fantasy, they propose to take her to see a legendary (possibly nonexistent) beach. She laughs the idea off until she finds that her husband (Ariuro Rios) has been cheating on her, whereupon she agrees to go with them. Since they never expected her to accept, the boys have to pull the trip together at the last moment.

Once we hit the road, *Y TU MAMA TAMBIEN* becomes not only a journey to find the mythical beach, but a journey into the selves of the three characters—and into the heart of Mexico. Original? As an idea, not in the least. As developed, however, it's better than original: it's truthful. Are these characters going to learn truths about each other? Is the sexual tension between them going to erupt? Will this trip leave the three of them completely different than they were at the beginning? Of course, all these things happen, but not in the way Hollywood has taught us to expect. The resulting discoveries aren't neatly packaged and don't shy away from things Hollywood either pretends don't exist, or else touches so tentatively that if you blink you'll miss them. While *Y TU MAMA TAMBIEN* is utterly sexual in terms of nudity and content and dialogue (it's the most blatantly erotic film

in ages), it primarily uses sexuality as an exploration of the growth of the characters and the nature of bonding and the ultimate sadness that can come with self-realization. It's a quietly shattering film that reminds one of Gertrude Stein's matter-of-factly disheartening sentence, "Little by little we never met again."

The DVD extras include the short film *ME LA DEBES* by Carlos Cuaron, deleted scenes, a "making of" featurette, a trailer and TV spot, and an audio commentary with the cast. Make sure you get the unrated version, leave the other to the guardians of public morality.

Ken Hanke

PEYTON PLACE RETURN TO PEYTON PLACE

20th Century Fox Home Video—\$14.98 each
Grace Metalious' 1956 novel *Peyton Place* was the book of the fifties, read under the bed covers and behind closed doors. The "impossible to film" movie version was highly anticipated.

John Michael Hayes' screenplay for the 1957 Jerry Wald production changed the book's details considerably, but *PEYTON PLACE* still offers quite a show. The story of Constance Mackenzie (Lana Turner) and her daughter, Allison (Diane Varsi), is a powerful one. Constance gave birth to Allison out of wedlock, although she pretends her "husband" died

years earlier. The secondary plot concerns the rape of Selena Cross (Hope Lange) by her stepfather, Lucas Cross (Arthur Kennedy), and his subsequent murder. This is strong stuff even today, after the stigma of the single mother has disappeared. All three actresses were nominated for Oscars for their work, as was Kennedy.

Russ Tamblyn turns in fine work as mama's boy Norman Page, though the film doesn't go nearly as far as the novel in presenting his unhealthy home life. (Mrs. Page loves to give her not-so-little boy enemas.) Typical of the clean-up job done by Hayes, Wald, and director Mark Robson is their handling of the Rodney Harrington/Betty Anderson subplot. Rodney (Barry Coe) is the town rich boy, Betty (Terry Moore) the town tramp. They marry secretly, Rodney dies a hero in World War II, and Betty



(carrying Rodney's child) goes to live in the Harrington mansion. In the novel, Betty goes to live in the mansion, all right, but she never marries Rodney—who loses his life when he loses control of his car while being orally serviced by another girl.

Lloyd Nolan (Doc Swain), Betty Field (Nellie Cross), Leon Ames (Leslie Harrington), Mildred Dunnock (Elsie Thornton), and David Nelson (Ted Carter) provide excellent support. The weak link is Lee Philips as high school principal Mike Rossi who at times sounds disconcertingly like Mickey Mouse and is no suitable match for Turner.

Extras on the widescreen stereo DVD include the AMC BACKSTORY featuring PEYTON PLACE, commentaries by Tamblyn and Moore, and a couple of newsreels. The Tamblyn and Moore tracks (recorded separately and dropped in at scene-specific moments) are interesting. Tamblyn recalls his costars fondly, especially Varsi—Moore is more vague and even surprised at a plot twist, proclaiming, "Oh, I had forgotten that."

PEYTON PLACE is a visit to a world that never entirely existed except in Metalious' mind (she's featured in short clips during the backstory feature), but its condemnation of small-mindedness is pointed and cuts to the quick, even today.

Metalious was persuaded to write *Return to Peyton Place* (1960) against her better judgment, but Hollywood and her publishers demanded a sequel. Not only is the book inferior to the first novel, but the film is inferior to the first movie. Small wonder, since the book features such unfilmable plotlines as Ted Carter's sexual humiliations at the hands (and body) of his bitch-on-wheels wife, Jennifer, while mother Roberta Carter listens from the room next door. You'll find none of that in Jose Ferrer's RETURN TO PEYTON PLACE (1961), wherein Ted (Brett Halsey) weds lovely Italian Raffaela (Luciana Paluzzi) while ex-love Selena Cross (Tuesday Weld) hooks up with Swedish ski instructor Nils Larsen (Gunnar Helstrom). The whole thing plays like GIDGET GOES TO PEYTON PLACE. Thank God for Mary Astor, who lords it over all as Roberta, condemning the tell-all book by Allison Mackenzie (Carol Lynley) and trying to break up her son's marriage.

RETURN TO PEYTON PLACE (like PEYTON PLACE itself) has been beautifully restored by Fox. In addition to the widescreen feature, the disc features Movietone news footage, a commentary by writer/historian Sylvia Stoddard, and the theatrical trailer.

—Jack Randall Earles and Drew Sullivan

THE ASSASSINATION BUREAU
Paramount Home Video—\$14.99
A rousing, globetrotting adventure featuring Oliver Reed in his prime, THE ASSASSINATION BUREAU (1969, based on an unfinished Jack London novel

called *The Assassination Bureau, Ltd.*, completed posthumously by Robert L. Fish in 1963) is a pleasantly diverting romp.

Ivan Dragomiloff (Reed) is the head of a hitman-for-hire organization, The Assassination Bureau, Ltd., a group that prides themselves on doing the world favors by killing only those morally reprehensible enough to deserve it. Proto feminist reporter Miss Winter (Diana Rigg), eager to helm her first great story for boss Lord Bostwick (Telly Savalas), sets out to track Dragomiloff down and end his ghastly business. Confronting him, she demands that a contract be put on his own head, on the basis that he has killed countless people. This loophole, which is exploited by double agent Bostwick (who desires to



head the organization), causes the international gentlemen of the Assassination Bureau to sportingly hunt Dragomiloff, who in turn doesn't hesitate to kill his own agents. What follows is a tour-de-force of Europe, replete with antiquated spy gadgets, narrow escapes, and gentle jabs at late Victorian sensibilities.

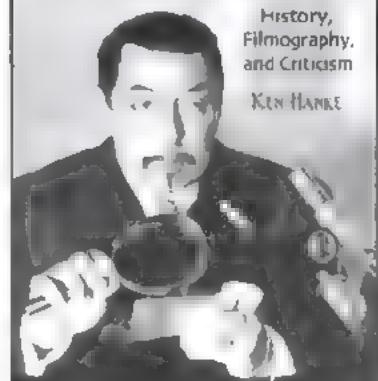
Somewhere between James Bond and Harry Flashman, Reed's Dragomiloff is a debonair superhero with intelligence and style to spare. It's a shame that none of the other assassins measure up, since the film initially creates an intriguing premise not unlike THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME (1932). The supporting cast is generally adequate, especially the dryly campy General von Pinck (Curt Jürgens), but this is clearly a vehicle for Reed to show off his freshly-acquired leading man status. Rigg's performance is initially memorable, though her character loses lots of urgency by the last third of the film and is ultimately relegated to the back seat. Salvalas's cultured but distrustful Bostwick lends some charisma to the caricatured group of foreign antagonists, though he's limited by an only occasionally funny script.

Stylistically, THE ASSASSINATION BUREAU leaves something to be desired. The camerawork is generally unobtrusive and subject-appropriate, save

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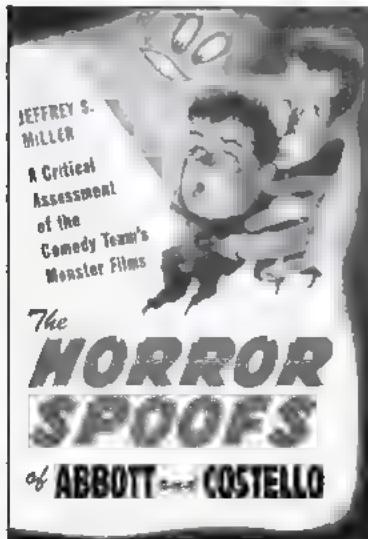
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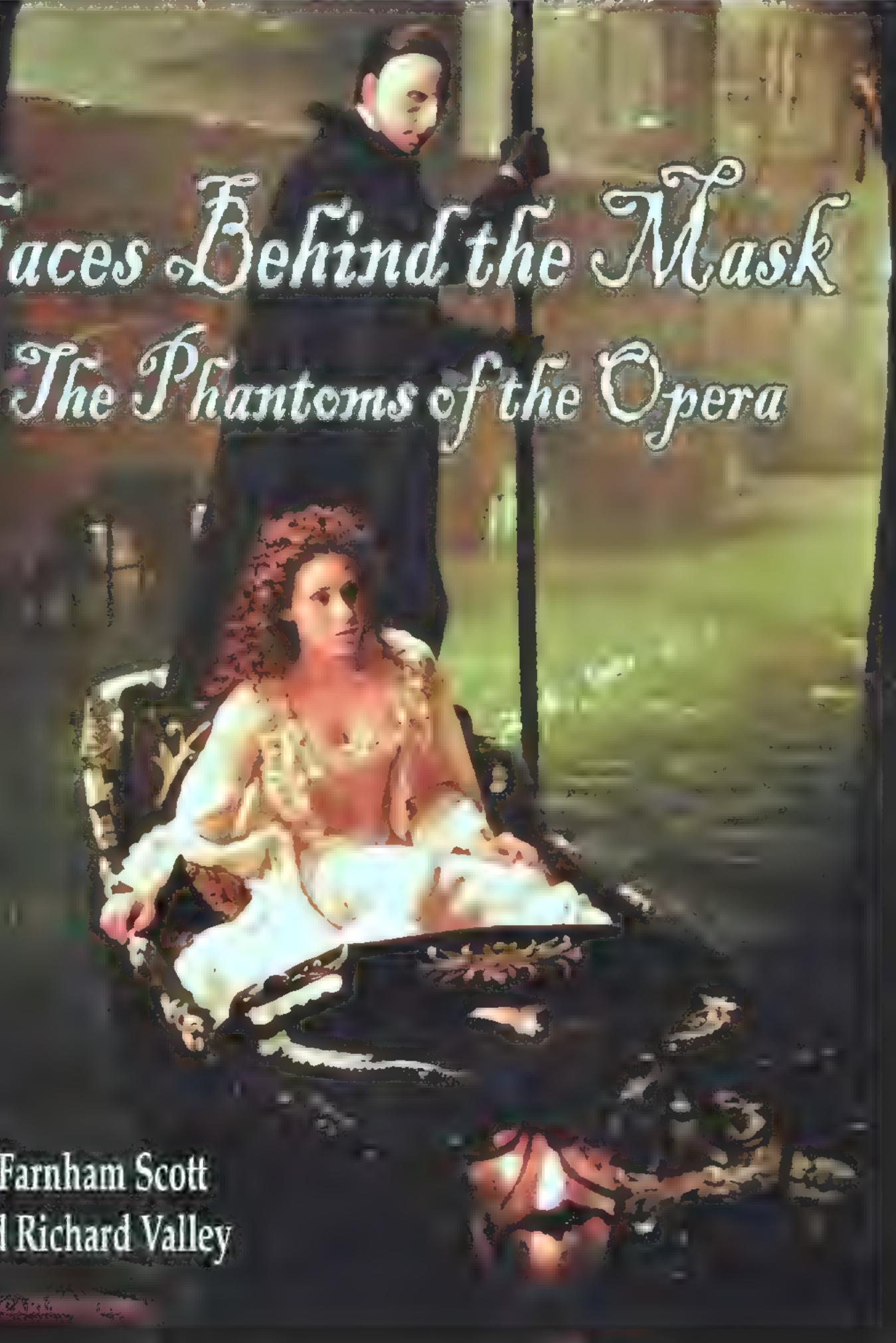


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Faces Behind the Mask

The Phantoms of the Opera

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LEFT: Lon Chaney's artistry and amazing makeup skills immortalized **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA** on movie screens in 1925. Facially, his Opera Ghost remains unsurpassed. CENTER: Claude Rains was a somewhat father but nonetheless effective Phantom in Universal's Technicolor remake on 1943. Too much music, griped some horror fans, but the music was lovely. RIGHT: Herbert Lom's Phantom was so down on his luck that he couldn't even afford a mask with two eyeholes. Still, the reputation of the 1963 Hammer Films **PHANTOM OF THE OPERA** has grown over the years.

"The Opera Ghost really existed. He was not, as long believed, a creature of the imagination. Yes, he existed in flesh and blood, although he assumed the complete appearance of a real phantom; that is to say, of a spectral shade . . .

"He is extraordinarily thin and his dress coat hangs on a skeleton frame. His eyes are so deep that you can hardly see the fixed pupils. You just see two big black holes, as in a dead man's skull. His skin, which is stretched across his bones like a drumhead, is not white, but a nasty yellow. His nose is so little worth talking about that you can't see it side-face; and the absence of that nose is a horrible thing to look at. All the hair he has is three or four dark locks on his forehead and behind his ears."

Gaston Leroux's *The Phantom of the Opera* (1911)

Tough popular, Gaston Leroux's famous horror story utterly fails as detective fiction. The plotting is convoluted and muddy. The conception of the title character and the evocative milieu of the backstage world of the Paris opera, however, are fine. Still, without the many film versions, the Phantom might well have faded from view long ago. That holds especially true of the first film adaptation, starring Lon Chaney and released in 1925.

Without Chaney and his makeup genius, we probably would not now know the Opera Ghost. Chaney caught Leroux's description of the Phantom exactly, painfully, magically. Chaney's artistry as an actor and as a pioneer in cinema makeup effects lifted the character of Erik the Phantom into the general imagination, where it has remained for decades. While the silent film, that magical realization of storytelling by pantomime and music, is a thing of the past, the first Universal film of **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA** remains one of the most enduring of the silent era. Indeed, often it is the only silent film modern audiences know.

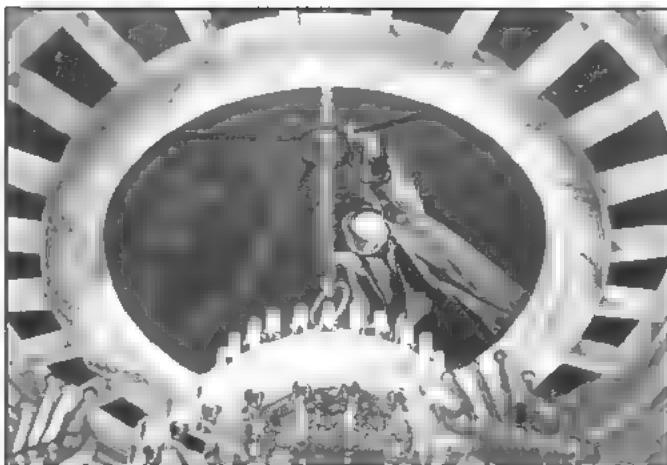
After a stormy genesis and several different cuttings and releases (there are actually two extant versions: the original 1925 preview version and a subsequent shortened sound release in 1929), Carl Laemmle's pro-

duction was an enormous success. On a personal level for star Chaney, it became, with only his **HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME** (1923) Quasimodo to rival it, his signature makeup.

Many versions of the tragic romantic story—of the obsession of the mad composer, Erik of the distorted countenance, with Christine Daae, the sweet young soprano he has been secretly coaching—have appeared since the 1925 film, culminating in the international stage success of Cameron Mackintosh's production of the award-winning musical by British composer Andrew Lloyd Webber. After almost 20 years on the boards, the Lloyd Webber continues to delight audiences on Broadway, in tours around the world, and in the remarkable screen adaptation by director Joel Schumacher. Chandeliers may fall, but the Phantom himself will forever remain in the heights of horrodom.

In 1943, Universal released a Technicolor remake with Claude Rains in the role of Erik Cladlin, the Phantom. As the name change indicates, the character—to say nothing of Leroux's plot—was significantly altered. Long before production commenced, Lon Chaney's son, Creighton, was promised the role if he would change his name to Lon Chaney, Jr. He did, got his screen contract, and became the foremost player of Universal's shrinking horror factory, but he never had his night at the opera. Instead, he had to settle for the little-seen today **MAN-MADE MONSTER** (1941) for his debut. Mentioned for both the Phantom and Quasimodo roles, Chaney Jr. was destined never to remake either of his father's great successes—though he appeared briefly as the Hunchback in the 1962 "Lizard's Leg and Owlet's Wing" episode of television's **ROUTE 66**.

A great character actor, Claude Rains gave a performance more sympathetic than horrifying in a production usually described—not entirely accurately—as "more Opera than Phantom." A splendid showcase for the vocal talents of baritone Nelson Eddy as opera star Anatole Garrow and G-above-high C Susanna Foster as Christine Dubois (not Daae), the production won an Academy Award for its color cinematography by Russell A. Gausman. Featuring the original film's stage setting and recreation of the Paris Opera's chandelier,



LEFT: When the Phantom gets sore, he gets saw, as Claude Rains proves in the 1943 Universal production of THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA. RIGHT: Hammer's 1962 Phantom was Herbert Lom (pictured with Heather Sears), who parodied the mad organist in THE PINK PANTHER STRIKES AGAIN (1976)

it's one of the most lavish horror films ever produced by Universal. For all its musical interludes, director Arthur Lubin keeps the plot percolating, and the chandelier scene is arguably the most suspenseful version committed to film.

As promotion for the 1943 production, THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA was adapted for radio and aired on THE LUX RADIO THEATRE for the September 13 premiere of its 10th season. Introduced by Cecil B DeMille, the 40-minute dramatization starred Eddy, Foster, and Edgar Barrier (as police inspector Raoul D'Aubert, the role he played in the film). Stepping in for Claude Rains was Basil Rathbone, Universal's Sherlock Holmes, who lent his distinctive voice to the role of Erik (In the forties version, the Opera Ghost isn't born deformed, but is horribly scarred when acid is thrown in his face. Denied the ability to look horrific, Rathbone made splendid use of his voice to indicate the frightening change in the Phantom's countenance.)

Not wanting the sets to lay idle too long, Universal put them to use in a vehicle for Boris Karloff, the studio's top horror star of the thirties. THE CLIMAX (1944) was based on a 1909 play by Edward Locke. Susanna Foster returned as a soprano, this time romanced by handsome Turhan Bey in the tale of a stage doctor obsessed with the memory of the theater's former diva, who died "mysteriously." Universal had already reused the PHANTOM set in THE LAST WARNING (1929) and the Boris Karloff/Bela Lugosi vehicle THE RAVEN (1935) and, following THE CLIMAX, would take it out of mothballs for THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH (1956), TORN CURTAIN (1966), THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE (1967), and THE STING (1973), among other productions.

In the fifties, the Phantom appeared in two separate Spanish versions, made in 1954 and 1959. Several Asian productions began appearing about this time, as well.

In the sixties, Hammer Films, the British "Studio that Dripped Blood," which had made deals with Universal to produce color horrors starring some of the screen's most famous monsters, turned its attention to the Phantom. Hammer's PHANTOM OF THE OPERA (1962) was not a big commercial success, but director Terence Fisher always considered it one of his favorite films, his personal venture into the romantic film world of his inspiration, director Frank Borzage. Like Rains before him, Herbert Lom played his Phantom for sympathy, relegating the bloodier tasks required by Phantomhood to a dwarfish assistant (Ian Wilson). The usual name game was played—the Opera Ghost was now Professor Petrie, Christine Daae/Dubois became Christine Charles (Heather Sears), Raoul de Chagny/Anatole Garron became Harry Hunter



(Edward Da Souza)—and the opera house itself was reduced in grandeur and transplanted from Paris to London. There was considerably more horror in evidence than in the 1943 picture and the Hammer version's reputation was grown over the years.

The same year that Hammer dropped its somewhat threadbare chandelier (not on the audience in this case, but on the Phantom himself), the Opera Ghost moved into the bedrooms of young monster movie fans across America as one of the popular Aurora plastic model kits. The face was based on the Chaney rendition, but the mask was reminiscent of the one worn by Rains. It was the first of many Phantom models to come.

The following year, the Phantom went Italian. He also became one of the Undead as the main character in THE VAMPIRE OF THE OPERA (1964), a film by Renato Poselli. After a decade's rest, the Phantom—or variations thereof—returned on the small screen in THE PHANTOM OF HOLLYWOOD (1974, with Jack Cassidy as the Terror of Tinseltown) and on the big screen in Brian de Palma's rock and roll satire, THE PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE (1974, with William Finley sporting a Phantom mask that made him look like the front grill on a Rolls Royce).

Maximilian Schell, the magnetic star of JUDGMENT AT NUREMBERG (1961), took on the role next in a 1983 television costarring the lovely Jane Seymour. The opera house was now located in Budapest, the Ghost because conductor Sandor Korvin, and Christine became Maria Gianelli, the spitting—or rather, singing—image of Korvin's late wife. (Seymour played both roles.) Under Robert Markowitz's direction, Sherman Yellen's script had a touch of THE CLIMAX to it.

In 1986, Leroux's novel became public domain, signaling that it was time for the Phantom to move enter the world of the musical stage. No less than four musical versions were composed. Following attempts by Kathleen Masterson and Ken Hill, and more significantly, Maury Yeston, it was Andrew Lloyd Webber's version that emerged the front-runner, succeeding on a global scale. Starring Michael Crawford (no longer the rail thin, callow youth of 1966's A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM and 1969's HELLO DOLLY!), the show won England's Olivier Award, and seven Tony awards on Broadway. Over 58 million people have seen the stage musical in 110 cities in 20 countries.

The Phantom continued to haunt the movie screens in two more spin-off adaptations—THE PHANTOM OF THE RITZ (1992), with young Joshua Sussman going crackers in the titular movie house, and, earlier, THE PHANTOM OF THE MALL: ERIC'S REVENGE (1989), with another unhappy teen, Eric Matthews (Derek Rydall).



LEFT: Let's see Liberace top this! Gerard Butler (also BOTTOM RIGHT) and Emmy Rossum in the screen's latest PHANTOM OF THE OPERA (2004). TOP RIGHT: Herbert Lom unmasked as the 1962 Phantom from Hammer Films. CENTER RIGHT: Claude Rains unmasked for the 1943 Technicolor spectacular.

hiding out in a shopping center. In a supporting role was one of the screen's genuine horrors—Pauly Shore!

In 1989, screen villain Robert Englund brought his Freddie Krueger sensibilities to a slasher film version in GASTON LEROUX'S PHANTOM OF THE OPERA (also known as PHANTOM OF THE OPERA: THE MOVIE). The film was directed by Dwight H. Little and featured Jill Schoelen as a modern-day Christine caught up in the Phantom's spell.

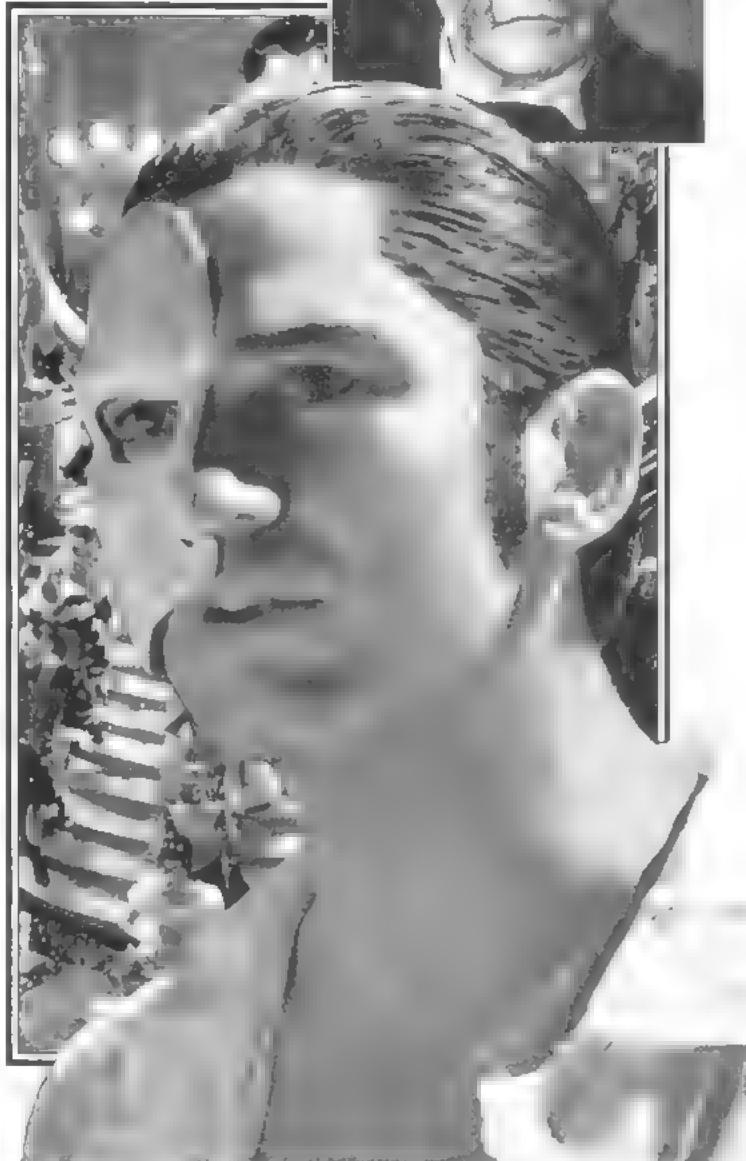
Returning to a version in which the Phantom's visage again matched the description of Erik's twisted countenance in a manner similar to the classic Lon Chaney creation, Celebrity Home Entertainment released a 1988 animated cartoon.

Derived from the same source script as the Yeston musical, playwright Arthur Kopit fashioned a 1990 TV miniseries starring Charles Dance as Erik, Teri Polo as Christine Daae, Adam Storke as Count Philippe de Chagny, and venerable Burt Lancaster as Gerard Carriere—the Phantom's father! Again, the accent was on romance. The finale featured a grand *coup de theatre* as the Phantom stepped from the shadows to join Christine in the famous passage of Marguerite's transcendence from Gounod's FAUST. The film is often praised as a faithful adaptation of the novel, but you won't find Big Daddy Phantom or a FAUST-singing Opera Ghost in anything by Leroux. (Someone should have reminded Kopit of Nannette Fabray's famous line from 1953's THE BAND WAGON: "But we don't wanna write FAUST!"

The turn of the century saw the appearance on the Disney Cable network of THE PHANTOM OF THE MEGA PLEX (2000), a children's TV movie in which the venerable Mickey Rooney—more venerable, even, than Lancaster—plays Movie Mason, who helps Pete Riley (Taylor Handley) solve a mystery.

In 2004, the film version of the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical, starring Gerard Butler as the Phantom, Emmy Rossum as Christine, and Patrick Wilson as Raoul, came to the screen under the direction of Joel Schumacher. Nominated for an Academy Award for its art direction and deserving of greater acknowledgment, this PHANTOM is a stunning achievement, full of color, wonderful melody, and breathtaking visuals—easily one of the best transferences of a musical from stage to screen.

Erik, The Phantom has endured for almost 100 years. Likely he will continue to stalk the backstage of our imaginations and roam the scarlet streets of our memories for decades to come.



Director Joel Schumacher is a stranger to the *feel good* movie. Street, so many of his films—*THE LAST OF SHEILA* (1989, as costume designer), *THE LOST WORLD: JURASSIC PARK* (1997), *FLATLINERS* (1990), *JAYMAN NEVER* (1995), *BATMAN AND ROBIN* (1997)—are some of the more brutal in the Hollywood lexicon. His recent liaison with Andrew Lloyd Webber in *The Last Castle* and *Condominium* remains, unfortunately, in the same camp. It was an unexpected thrill to see Schumacher's *Shrek* (2001) and *The Mask* (1994). He was also the *phantom* of the *library*.

feel Schaubach's. It was 1930. I
just made THE LOST CITY and I got
call that ALICE LLOYD WEBBER
wanted "SWEETHEART OF THE
MOUNTAINS". I made a mistake and
confused her with someone else. We

and *Flatliners*, and *Under the Dome* of *Time Magazine*. I went to see the show when I found out he wanted to see me, and my immediate thought was, "This is so cinematic." I never thought I'd get the job, but I went to Jennifer and said what I thought, and I got it. We prepared the movie while I was doing *FLATLINERS*. I was flying back and forth to Europe; we were going to shoot in N. W. Munich and, guess, with Michael Caine and with Christopher Lee. For personal and professional reasons, Andrew had to cancel it in 1990 [Christopher Lee died in 1990].

[Lord Webber divorced that year], we stayed very close friends over the years. In 2002, I was doing the post-VERONICA GUERNSEY film I'd done working with Cate Blanchett. We were doing our post in England. I had Cate and her son, Andrew, and his wife, Andrea, in the process of raising the money for THE PHANTOM. He was in production himself so he could get the movie he always wanted. His lovely wife, Andrea, was extremely persuasive at that time. She came with an idea. [Laughs] She got me to rethink the story. I had written a sleepless night and I went back to Andrew the next day and said, "Look, Andrew, if you can analyze the story—this narrative about a very young man who's even a teenager. First of all, the boy is still always a girl. Secondly, I want her to be innocent. I want her relationship with him to be the awakening of romanticism and her relationship with the Phantom to be the awakening of a much darker sexual passion, an obsessive, destructive love. Emmy Rossum did a phenomenal job! She was 16 when she signed on, and had her 17th birthday on the set. I can't say enough about cast—Gerard Butler as the Phantom, Rick Wilson as Raoul—because a film like this requires an enormous amount of talent."





Man Behind the Camera

Joe Schumacher

interviewed by Richard Valley

interviewed by Richard Valley

DE Tech's **new** **chassis** **challenges** **the** **industry** **with** **extreme** **flexibility**.

...? For perhaps the first time in my career I was asked to do a production of PHANTOM, RAOUL, and I found it an interesting character to play. In the show, Raoul is practically nothing but a device to keep Jeanne's heart occupied while Andrew we managed to have some magic love triangles. In order for me to do this, I had to be a triangle. All three characters had to be very strong and very determined. I thought it was particularly pleasant to give the Phantom a bit of what he wants, where he comes from, why he's living in the opera house, how he got there, and why Madame Giry is protecting him. So I made up that little story. Andrew loved it and wrote some wonderful music for it. The play begins with Raoul as a dyed-in-the-wool anarchist in his wheelchair, buying an armchair at the auction in the old theater. Well, if you start a movie with somebody buying something at an auction, you can't end the audience on a plateau. I started bookending it by writing the "melodrama" sections in black and white. I was also faced with the challenge of how to get into what Andrew called "the living through memory." We needed to create the black-and-white sequences, tape recordings, and so forth. I did this, which was a very interesting experience following the First World War.

SS: You have done some work before.
IS: Actually, I got the job because Andrew loved the way I used music and fossils in *THE LOST BOYS*.
SS: Will *THE LOST BOYS* be a regular part of your repertoire?
IS: I think so. I'm a fan of the movie.
SS: Third of all, I'd seen "A Star Is Born" No Name" by Clarence "Frogman" Henry. You know, I love music. The first screening I wrote and did—*WAN-*

ULE—is about three African American girls who sing rhythm and blues. It was really a drama with musical scenes. WASH has music all throughout it, though. The great Norman Woodfield. Some people are purists who think that a scene is a silent, basically, and take offense from my film. But I'm from the school that considers sound moving images as a music complimentarity. We still do a beautiful way to tell a story; I think that sometimes we're too much on the three-act structure. I think it's very wonderful to do what I do—just an entire black and white action and dialogue, without dialogue, too. At one of the few silent films, and then now you'll find an eastern or a European film with very little talking and you don't need it. I've worked with many great composers on my films. In fact, in the first time I made the computer hired me! (Laughs) In the past, of course, I never had my characters running around singing—except for myself in the bathtub. So it was very difficult. I try to choose something very different each time I make a film, and originally this was as far from VERONICA'S SURGICAL PHONE BOOTH as I could get. It required a different kind of music, a different kind of score.

about Andrew I was most adamant about him. Andrew loved this idea—was all wrong to act as if really act the roles while singing it. To accomplish that, we recorded a rough scratch track so they knew what they were singing back to, but they were also recorded live in the studio at the same time. That way, the director could sequence or caught or anything else. I didn't sing myself, which I could have done. In the performance, the film, we've even stuck having to match up a perfectly recorded vocal parts that didn't go back and sing with them in post-production. It was very helpful to the cast because they weren't locked into a set musical vanishing point for decades.

16. Once we hit the ~~stage~~ and the
early seventies, we were very realis-
tic about movies dealing with every sort
of subject. Suddenly it was a movie where
people stopped speaking and broke
into song and seemed to be flying about.
But there were some great exceptions
during those years. *THE CAGE* is one of
the biggest box office successes after
SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER with a musical,
even though of one day. And
MILES BONAVENTURE is another.
Then, in the late eighties, *FLASH GORDON*
was asked me to direct *FLASH GORDON*,
so musicians were using music. Some of
my friends said, "It's ridiculous, why
are you doing this?" But I always said
that *PHANTOM* wasn't just a movie
but that if you listen to the music
I used to have—it's still playing all
over the world! There's something
about it that has done so many inter-
views and press conferences with An-
drew, now, that I don't feel I'm telling

...and of natural. This reward from day to day is the most personal work and may never touch upon anything else. Better now all is forgotten. We were very much in love with

an *zeichner*, and that position is held by PHANTOM. I have my own kind of Freudian analysis. Even with *Die Stadt der Finsternis* I think it's a play of mind in society, as don't really with the object of desire, we identify with the person who's been lost, who's shut out, who's the outsider. There's universal feelings. I've worked with some of the most famous characters in the world, like *Die Stadt der Finsternis*. It's a very mysterious character, and it's a mysterious character that was born from the *Die Stadt der Finsternis* situation. I think the Phantom's statement is a metaphor for the state of our own culture. That we see only of shallow or materialized. The character is the character people see in us, even though we're a violent and dangerous culture and continually causing pain into ourselves. People feel betrayed. There are many people who want Christians to stay with the Phantom at the end. They feel the loss of the old world. I switched a third time because I wanted to tell different kinds of stories about people.

Anton I sympathize. What I know first hand—Sarah might as well be on stage for three hours, taking her butt off. As Bill says, Michael Crawford had it for 17 minutes and... Come on, Sarah would get wonderful applause—and Michael would be standing ovation! (Laughs) We didn't deserve it, but it was because people relate to the show.

Land feel so for him at the end. Speaking of touching moments, the wonderful one near the end of the film *Carilda*, has been such a pleasure throughout the story, thinking only of self. But the last time you see her, she's crying over the body of her husband. I told Minnie Driver, who plays Carilda, that he was the only person in the world who could not get her to smile.

man. Carlotta is played by a woman, and the reason I wanted to do it is because she's a real diva, and I didn't let her to just play...I'm sorry. These are some of the famous opera divas that I saw who act like that. There are a lot of people in the music industry that act like that! (Laughs) Anybody that's self-aggrandized, that's self-centered, is terribly and excruciatingly annoying...as the tenor who parts her and I through everything with her to the last note.

broken
When you were climbing just now
you were 100% in previous
and now
You have been climbing up
the mountain since
last night
and you are
over frankenstein with
no kind of dracula with

If I taught, if you made it rich with
the characters, you'd get me to make
some very valuable you think you are
not even if you go too

feeling you because they were amazingly perfect, archetypal versions.
It's interesting about the Champs
in that I've never ever had
an idea that I'd actually designed at the
time. I mean, we built me up as
as a very accurate, intuitive kind
of designer.
It's been like never the finished
product starts.

The next day we were up at 5 A.M. and had breakfast at 6. We had a long walk to the beach, and I took a boat to the island of Kauai. The weather was very bad, and we had to wait for a long time before we could get off. When we finally did, we saw many birds and animals, including a large colony of boobies. We also saw some seals and a group of humpback whales. It was a wonderful day, and we all enjoyed ourselves.

Mr. Clegg, there are numerous reports of subversive elements and their agents here and there. None of course is as threatening as the Right Wing, but you can't imagine how quickly it would move if only one right-wing and American could blow down there. We've seen so many weird ones here. Moreover, he also used genuine revolutionary organizations. The master spy is extremely suspicious. He is very

supposed to say the name Macbeth
and Backbone. TERRIBLE DRAMA
supposed to happen if you say Mac-
beth (Lanark) to break like bad lace.
I am supposed to spit around twice
in the left and spit. I was back-
stage at RAMBOURG during MIKE

Well, it's a very good question.
Yes! The character could be taken
out of the story.

Do you remember the part of *Scarlet Street*? So many of his films—*THE LAST OF SHEILA* (1973, as costume designer), *THE LOST BOYS* (1985), *FLATLINERS* (1990), *BATMAN FOREVER* (1995), *BATMAN AND ROBIN* (1997)—are at home on our Street that we've interviewed Joel (pictured right with Andrew Lloyd Webber) in the past and can always count on an amusing, informative, insightful chat. It was no exception when Scarlet Street spoke to him about his sumptuous film version of Broadway's *THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA*.

Joel Schumacher: It was 1988. I'd just made *THE LOST BOYS* and I got a call that Andrew Lloyd Webber wanted to meet me in London. I thought he'd made a mistake and confused me with someone else, because I didn't know he'd seen *THE LOST BOYS*. He was already a legend. *THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA* was already a legend. It was playing in England already, had opened on Broadway, and was on the cover of *Time* magazine. I went to see the show when I found out he wanted to see me, and my immediate thought was, "This is so cinematic!" I never thought I'd get the job, but I went to London and met with him—and I got it! We prepared the movie while I was doing *FLATLINERS*. I was flying back and forth to Europe; we were going to shoot it in Munich and Prague, with Michael Crawford and Sarah Brightman. For personal and professional reasons, Andrew had to cancel it in 1990 [Brightman and Lloyd Webber divorced that year], but we stayed very close friends over the years. In 2002, I was doing the post of *VERONICA GUERIN*, a film I'd done in Ireland with Cate Blanchett. We were doing our post in England. I had Christmas dinner with Andrew and his wife. Andrew was in the process of raising the money for *PHANTOM*. He wanted to produce it himself so he could have the movie he always wanted. His lovely wife Madeline was extremely persuasive at dinner; she came with an agenda! (Laughs.) She got me to rethink the story. I had a rather sleepless night and I went back to Andrew the next day and said, "Look, Andrew, if you really analyze the story, the heroine must be very young—maybe even a teenager. First of all, the ballet girls always are girls. Secondly, I want her to be innocent. I want her relationship with Raoul to be the awakening of romantic love and her relationship with the Phantom to be the awakening of a much darker sexual passion, an obsessive, destructive love. Emmy Rossum did a phenomenal job! She was 16 when we hired her and had her 17th birthday on the set. I can't say enough about all the cast—Gerard Butler as the Phantom, Patrick Wilson as Raoul—because a movie like this requires an enormous amount



Man Behind the Camera

Joel Schumacher

interviewed by Richard Valley

of technique—it has challenges that aren't in the average film.

Scarlet Street: For perhaps the first time in a production of *PHANTOM*, Raoul is himself an interesting character.

So in the show, Raoul is practically a walk-in device to keep things heated up. I told Andrew we needed to have a really tragic love triangle. In order for it to be a triangle, all three characters had to be very strong and very delineated. I thought it was particularly important to give the Phantom a history—who he is, where he comes from, why he's living in the opera house, how he got there, and why Madame Giry is protecting him. So I made up that back story. Andrew loved it and wrote some wonderful music for it. The play begins with Raoul as a dying old man in his wheelchair, buying the toy monkey at the auction in the old theater. Well, if you start a movie with somebody buying something at an auction, you owe the audience an explanation. I started bookending it, putting the "modern" sections in black and white. I was also faced with the challenge of how to get into what Andrew called "trudging through mud." We needed to create the black-and-white sequences representing Paris in 1910, which was gritty and sordid following the First World War,

and which had a great deal of poverty and automobiles and congestion—very juxtaposed, animosity in Paris.

That would be our reality, this burnt-out hulk of a theater. Then, when the chandelier is relit, it brings the old theater to life and we go back to 1870. It represented the journey in a dying man's mind to the days when he was young, when he was in love, when all options were possible—and therefore led you into fantasy and helped you accept the music. It was very exciting to do. One of the problems you're faced with when you adapt any theatrical production—whether it be drama or musical—is that you can't reproduce the thrills and chills of a live performance in film. You can't stage the show, but you have to find new ways to tell the same story. A show, after all, can never produce the thrills and chills of cinema.

Scarlet Street: You'd never make a musical before.

Joel Schumacher: Actually, I got the job because Andrew loved the way I used music and visuals in *THE LOST BOYS*.

Scarlet Street: Well, *THE LOST BOYS* had a musical number of sorts—Corey Haim singing in the bathtub. (See Page 45.)

Joel Schumacher: That's right! He sang "Ain't Gonna Give No Home" by Clarence "Progman" Henry. You know, I love music. The first screenplay I wrote and sold—*STAR-*

girls who sing rhythm and blues. It was really a drama with music. CAR-

RETT: I think it's important that you consider music complimentary to the way to tell a story. I didn't do that so much in my first two films, but I'm much more like three.

European film—
and you don't need it. There were many great composers on my set, but this is the first time I had the composer hired me! (Laughs) In the past, of course, I never had my character sing around singing—except for in the bathtub. So it was very

I try to choose something different each time I make a film, and this was far from VERONICA CHASE or PHONE BOOTH.

I could have required a different message. I learned an enormous amount about myself. I loved this idea—was allowed to really act the roles while we recorded the scratch tracks. I was singing and recorded them. These were the most adams

ways, though, as if it was a movie having

in production. I helped in the editing and I helped into the musicals to take

it. Once we hit the really rehearsals, we brilliant movies deal with subjects. Suddenly people stepped on stage and seemed absurd. But there were some exceptions during these years.

SATURDAY

Milos P.

that this is his most personal work and he may never touch upon anything

those characters, you in some way whet-

the appetite for more. I think that's what I'm doing with this film.

SS: You're right. I think that's what I'm doing with this film.

JS: I think that's what I'm doing with this film.

SS: And I think that's what I'm doing with this film.

JS: What I'm doing with this film.

SS: And I think that's what I'm doing with this film.

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JS: What I'm doing with this film.

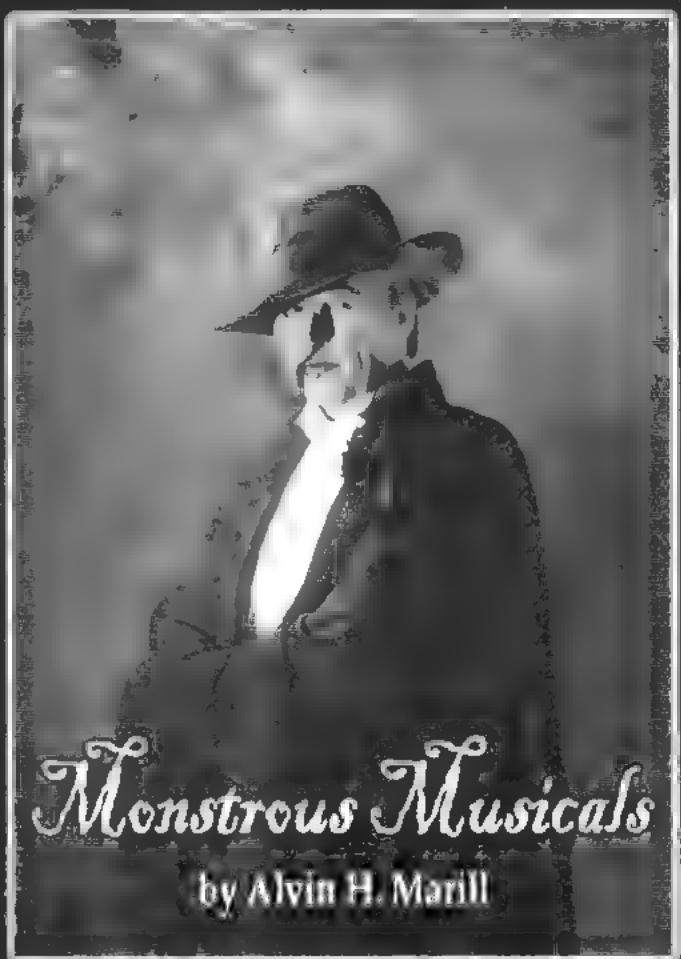
SS: And I think that's what I'm doing with this film.

JS: What I'm doing with this film.

i



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Monstrous Musicals

by Alvin H. Marill

Frankenstein rocks! On the musical stage. So do Dracula, Dorian Gray, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Saucy Jack (as in Jack the Ripper), The Phantom of the Opera, and The Hunchback of Notre Dame, among many others.

Many of the favorite movie—and literary—horror creatures have found their way to musicalization on the British, Canadian, and American stages. Take Mary Shelley's immortal creation from her 1818 Gothic novel. Through the years, aside from the assorted straight and sometimes bent adaptations of her tale, there are these to consider. There was a one-act musical drama that the Minnesota Opera commissioned in 1990 from composer/librettist Libby Larsen, called FRANKENSTEIN: THE MODERN PROMETHEUS. At the other end, a treat in 2000 was FRANKENSTEIN: THE ROCK MUSICAL, which premiered in New York's Greenwich Village at La Mama.

Although there never on stage was the undying thrill of watching the Frankenstein Monster in top hat and tails performing to the tune of Irving Berlin's "Puttin' on the Ritz," as when Peter Boyle hoofed his way through Mel Brooks' YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN (1974), there was the musical show FRANKIE, presented by the venerable George Abbott (at age 102!) in October 1989 at Off-Broadway's York Theatre Company. Abbott not only auditioned with Donald Suddet, but also wrote the libretto for the score by Joseph Turin (music) and Gloria Nissensohn (lyrics). Richard White, a popular favorite on the regional theater scene, starred as Victor Frankenstein, opposite Elizabeth Walsh and Gil Rogers as the Creature, named Frankie. The sight of the audience going up the aisles and out into the street after the final curtain, humming "The Grave Digger's Song" doubtless was unique in musical theater history.

More traditional and respectful to the original has been THE MARY SHELLEY OPERA, which had concert readings in August 1996 and February 1998, and then was staged in New York in August 1999 by the Collaborative Arts Project 21. Deborah Atherton wrote the libretto; Allan Jaffe the music. John Hamel portrayed both Percy Bysshe Shelley and Victor Frankenstein; Keaton Douglas was Mary Shelley, and Judd Harris, the Creature. Similarly straightforward was FRANKENSTEIN: THE MUSICAL, which played at Long Beach, California, in February–March 1999—and apparently never since. Carol Weiss wrote both music and lyrics to the ambitious, though eminently forgettable score.

Frankenstein's cohort from the Universal days of the early thirties, Dracula, also has hit the musical stage, and he slunk furtively to Broadway at the outset of the 2004–5 season, where he was savaged by the New York critics. DRACULA: THE MUSICAL tried out at the La Jolla Playhouse in late 2001, apparently, under director Des McAnuff, attempting to work out the bugs (and bats). The score by Frank Wildhorn, with book and lyrics by Don Black and Christopher Hampton, promised to show its bite with a score featuring songs such as "First Taste," "Fresh Blood," and "Nosferatu" (Now that promises to be an evergreen from the musical stage.) The La Jolla company offered a cast of not especially well-known actors: Tom Hewitt as Dracula, Amy Rubberg as Lucy Westenra, Jenna Morse as Mina Murray, Tom Stuart as Jonathan Harker, and Tom Flynn as Abraham Van Helsing. The Broadway version had Hewitt repeating his title role opposite Melissa Errico, but the Van Helsings of the Broadway critical fraternity put the show out of its misery with a just-after-the-first-of-the-new-year stake in the heart.

Earlier musical stage Draculas included DEAREST DRACULA (1965), staged in Dublin. It was the work of Margaret Hill, Charlotte Moore, and Jack Murdock (book); Gordon Caleb (music); and Fran Landsman and Joyce Adcock (lyrics). California's Berkeley Repertory Theatre staged "a musical nightmare in three acts" in spring 1974 with its dark tunefest, titled unoriginally DRACULA. It was written and directed by Douglas Johnson, with lyrics by Johnson and music by John Aschenbrenner. Among the numbers: "Welcome to Transylvania," "Have to Stay Awake," "Evil," and "Renfield's Lament." Another 1974 musical Dracula premiered in Rotterdam and a couple of years later made it to London's West End. It was by the Pip Simmons Theatre Group, with Pip writing and directing the show and Cris Jordan supplying the music.

In regional theater, the American Stage Company at Fairleigh Dickinson University in New Jersey, premiered POSSESSED—THE DRACULA MUSICAL in 1987, but such songs as "Love Sucks" and "Master of the Living and the Dead" couldn't keep its impaled heart beating. The show, with music by Carter Cathcart, lyrics by Jason Darrow, and book by Robert Marasco and Darrow, had good behind-the-footlight breeding, though. Paul Sorvino, at the time, was the ASC artistic director; it was staged by Broadway veteran Morton DaCosta.

Also on the relatively contemporary scene is DRACULA: THE CHAMBER MUSICAL, the Richard Ouzounian (book and lyrics) and Marek Norman (music) adaptation. The venture was critically acclaimed when it premiered in 1998 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and then at the Avon Theatre in Stratford, Ontario, during 1999. It had its first Stateside staging at the North Shore Musical Theatre in Beverly, Massachusetts, in 2002. A full-blown musical, it contained a 16-song score, including "Dreams of Darkness," "The Undead," and "The Blood Is Life."

Four distinct Dracula ballets from the nineties have been working their ways into assortments.

dancer repertories. Dayton Ballet premiered Stuart Sebastian's DRACULA in 1990. The ballet was later performed by the American Repertory Ballet Company at Princeton, New Jersey's McCarter Theatre (1992), then went on to New York's Fashion Institute of Technology. The late Christopher Gable's production, which originally was performed by the Northern Ballet Theatre in England in 1996, was given its American premiere by the Atlanta Ballet in late 1998. Dracula was danced by Chinese ballet star Wei Dong-sheng. The Houston Ballet premiered a another production (using music by Franz Liszt) in 1997 and later was danced by the Pittsburgh Ballet and at the Kennedy Center in Washington. Still another, danced to the music of Gustav Mahler, was commissioned by the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and premiered in 1998. (Another Chinese star, Zhang Wei-Qiang, danced Dracula.)

Andrew Lloyd Webber's enduring THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA always, it seems, will remain the monster success of the genre. The spectacular show (with book by Lloyd Webber and Richard Stilcoo, music by Lloyd Webber, and lyrics by Charles Hart) began its nonstop run on the musical stage on London's West End in October 1986, and has been playing continuously somewhere in the world ever since. Having opened in New York at the Majestic Theatre more than 17 years ago, it currently is the longest running show on Broadway. Michael Crawford became a matinee idol in the title role, first in London and then in New York, setting hearts aflutter with such insinuating ballads as "The Music of the Night."

Before Sir Andrew's production, there was the British send-up of the 1910 Gaston Leroux novel by Ken Hill, a cult figure of the London stage who spent his career tackling somewhat risibly other literary classics—like his earlier Jekyll and Hyde burlesque and his later THE INVISIBLE MAN (1982). Both homomorphically titled PHANTOM toured the provinces beginning in April 1984 and then became a staple at Theatre Royal, Stratford East—the home for nearly every Hill production that followed. The American premiere of Hill's PHANTOM—with music by Verdi, Gounod, Offenbach, Weber, Mozart, and Donizetti—was staged regionally in St. Louis in

spring 1987. Later it played in San Francisco and in Washington, for a year's run each. Unfortunately, it lacked a chandelier crashing into the audience eight times weekly!

Also bereft of the famously-dropping chandelier was the competing PHANTOM OF THE OPERA that toured the States but was not permitted to come to Broadway because of a specially-created Guild and League of Theatre Owners ruling. This PHANTOM, with a book by playwright Arthur Kopit and a score by Maury Yeston, had to advertise a disclaimer that it was not to be confused with the Lloyd Webber spectacular. Of all the musicals adapted from the Leroux novel, it's the truest to the source. This version premiered at Theatre Under the Stars in Houston, Texas, early in 1991, with the ubiquitous Richard White in the title role, and Glory Crampton as Christine. The production ultimately played at the Paper Mill Playhouse in New Jersey in late spring 1993. That was the closest it got to Broadway, but it attracted the New York critics, who gave it their thumbs up. Like Lloyd Webber's show, the Kopit/Yeston one continues playing somewhere in America to this day.

The 1986 world premiere in Albany of yet another musical production, entitled PHANTOM OF THE OPERA, OR THE PASSAGE OF CHRISTINE, with book and lyrics by Kathleen Masterson and music by David Bishop, also was interesting, but the show didn't make the cut. Nor did an elaborate PHANTOM OF THE OPERA that opened (and closed) in Miami Beach in February 1990, with a never-made-it score by Bruce Falstein (music) and Lawrence Rose and Paul Schierhorn (book and lyrics). For the record, though, it was videotaped and had a brief theatrical run beginning in May 1991 in a 93-minute version.

One that did make the cut, at least in the UK starting in 1998 and touring for years, was THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA ON ICE, skated initially by a company of Russian ice stars, with choreography by Giuseppe Areza (of La Scala) and Valeri Petcherki (of the Kirov Ballet). Original songs were by Tim Duncan, with music by Roberto Danova.

Jack the Ripper hit the boards musically and sang his heart out (while cutting others' out) first in the eponymous Ray Cooney British burlesque that made



DRACULA

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Choreography by Stuart Sebastian

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"a gripping theatrical work that audiences will want to see and will long remember"

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Continued on page 70

PAGE 44: Michael Crawford in the original Broadway production of THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA (1986). TOP RIGHT: Dennis Wayne in DOUBLE EXPOSURE (1972), the Joffrey Ballet based on *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). BOTTOM LEFT: The American Repertory Ballet's production of DRACULA (1992).



Dark Passages

The World of Film Noir

Contributions by John F. Black, Jon Anthony Carr, Jack Randall Earles, Paul M. Jensen, David Kalat, Lelia Loban, Harry H. Long, Michael Mallory, Ken Mogg, Barry Monush, Ron Morgan, Gary Palmer, and Jerry Renshaw.

Scarlet Street #29, #31, #34, and #40 featured earlier installments of our mini-review section on film noir. Once again here are more dark, rain-swept looks at a few films that push the noirish envelope from the trash-strewn alleys of the Big City to the lonesome trails of the Old West.

OUT OF THE PAST (1947)

"The ultimate film noir," "our incarneate... One of the key works of film noir," Jacques Tati's *Out of the Past* has been heralded as a paragon of the genre in part because it plays a little like other key works of film noir. *THE MALTESE FALCON* (1941), *DEUCE INDEMNITY* (1944), *THE BIG SLEEP* (1946)—have been cut up into little pieces and pasted together into something new. And the cat-and-mouse metaphor aptly describes the

structured and discontinuous narrative with sudden shifts in both tone and time.

Furthermore, this classic gem was forged by several of the genre's top practitioners: director Tautoune, cinematographer Nicholas Musuraca and several notable writers. (Interestingly, the script is credited to George Tomasini, who doesn't exist.) Tomasini is a pen name for black-listed scribe Daniel Mainwaring, who also wrote the novel *Build My Gallows High* (1946) on which the film was based. However, as recent scholarship has shown, Mainwaring may have provided the underlying plot, but the carefully structured screenplay with its hard-holed quips and banter is not his. (Mainwaring also tends to get more than his fair share of credit for his 1956 *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* screenplay,

which faithfully follows Jack Finney's exquisite 1954 novel.) Mainwaring's drafts were reworked by an uncredited James M. Cain, author of the novels that became *DOLITTLE IN DEMINITY* and *THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE*. Little though Cain's contributions survived to the screen. Instead—and most unpestedly—the sophistication and intricacy of the final shooting script came from no-name Frank Fenton, a journeyman writer toiling steadily away in the Hollywood mill.

OUT OF THE PAST consists of several major episodic sequences, each set in a different place and point in time. The first introduces the sleepy town of Briggport, Nevada, where unassuming gas station proprietor Bill Bailey (Robert Mitchum) is enjoying a day off with his sweethearts Ann (Virginia

Huston). They seem so comfortable with each other, they may have grown up together—but they haven't. In fact she has only known him a short while and his name isn't Bailey; after all, his past, which he thought he long ago outran and escaped, is about to come crashing down on top of him. This is *noir* country, and in *noir* the past never stays buried.

It's no coincidence that *noir* evolved in the forties during the war years when ancient hatreds and grudges past rose up to plunge the world into war all over again. *Noir* died out at the dawn of the Cold War, when the greatest threat to world safety relocated from the unquiet past to the uncertain future, and the science-fiction film came along to displace *noir* on B-movies.

As the flashback sequence reveals, Bailey was once Jeff Markham, a San Francisco private eye. He and his partner Fisher (Steve Brodie) were hired by gangster Whit Sterling (Kirk Douglas) never better to hunt down Kathie Moffett (Jane Greer). Whit's paramour, Kathie, has absconded with \$10 grand of Whit's after shooting him exactly what retribution Whit has in mind for Kathie's act of betrayal is left to the imagination. Whit trusts Jeff, but no sooner has Jeff found Kathie than he falls for her and they run off together, a romantic interlude brought to an abrupt end when Kathie kills the blackmailing Fisher.

Flash forward to the present to find Jeff torn. Here is a loyal, dependable Ann—a safe but passionless love. And there is Kathie, a destructive sprite, female fatale number one. His feelings for her amount to nothing less than a fatal attraction. Guess which one he picks?

Jeff is thrust back into Kathie's world when Whit tracks him down and sends him off to San Francisco on an errand designed to frame Jeff for murder. Jeff is smart enough to turn the tables on Whit—temporarily—but lacks the self-control to keep away from his greater enemy, Kathie. They end up in the only place they can—dead, in each other's arms, each trying to betray the other first. It is an inevitable, almost operatic tragic ending, but the gelling there is all the fun.

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Detective Brown (Charles McGraw) is assigned to pick up Mrs. Neil (Marie Windsor), a mobster's widow, and transport her by train across country to testify before a grand jury. Before even reaching the station, Brown's sugar-chomping partner (Don Beddoe) is blasted by gun thugs. On board the train, mob goons try to bribe and intimidate Brown, while he warms up to Mrs. Sinclair (Jacqueline White). Brown is disgusted by his assignment and by Mrs. Neil's callous gun moll attitude, but refuses to be swayed by the cash waved under his nose. The

thugs find Mrs. Neil and kill her but she turns out to be a decoy police woman sent as a decoy.

Marie Windsor plays the false Mrs. Neil to tramps per station and looks fine indeed in a black slip, white square-jawed *film noir* icon McGraw rattles off machine-gun-paced dialogue and administers brutal caning whipping to a thug in a Pullman car. *THE NARROW MARGIN* capitalizes on its limited budget by confining almost the entire action to the inside of the train and uses great camera work in the corridors to set up a suffocating sense of claustrophobia.

It's a testament to what the low-budget B-film can accomplish at the time, it was simply a modest, concise, unpretentious crime-suspense film, but now it's considered something of a *noir* classic. Director Richard Fleischer (son of animation pioneer Max Fleischer) honed his no-nonsense sensibilities in a lengthy career that would go on to include films as varied as *FANTASTIC VOYAGE* (1966), *DOCTOR DOLITTLE* (1967), *THE BOSTON STRANGLER* (1968), *SOYLENT GREEN* (1973), and *MR. MAJESTICK* (1974), all respectable if not outstanding movies. Forget the tepid 1990 remake with Gene Hackman, this is the real goods with a killer hard-boiled screenplay, plot twists aplenty and classic performances by familiar likes character actors.

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This is the movie that starts with a bang—dirty cop named Duncan shoots himself in the head—as his wife (Jeanne Crain), watches dispassionately. She knows immediately what to do: Pick up the phone and dial Call Out the Police, but criminal overlord slick Logana (Alexander Scourby), the former Mrs. Duncan now has the means to blackmail his entire syndicate. Either he pays her what she wants, or the truth of his huffy shooting will be released, and Logana's empire will crumble under the big heat.

Over the course of the next 90 minutes, director Fritz Lang will lay on the violence with sadistic gusto. A movie that opens with a suicide can only be topped by ever greater extremity, such as a woman blown to bits by a car bomb in front of her preschool daughter, not one but two people disfigured by scalding coffee thrown in their faces, various torture and beatings, all of which leads to a gunfight that resolves our heroes' various vengeful scores in a hail of bullets. Fun for the whole family!

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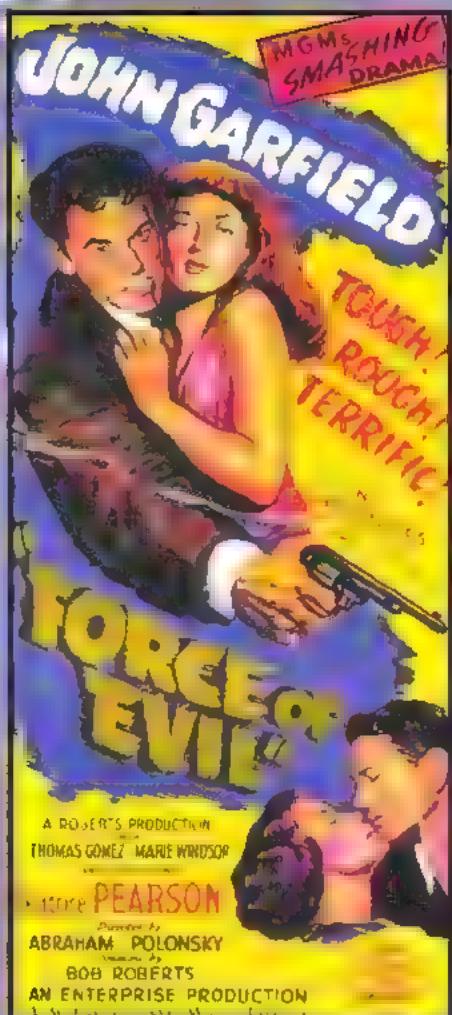
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"You're on a hate binge," a friend tells Bannon, but our angry hero has a point—just about everyone he knows really is corrupt. But if Bannon is discovering that everyone has a dark side, the converse is also true—even bad people can have a good side. Case in point, Debby Marsh (Gloria Grahame, lovely even in bandages), the much-abused girlfriend of Logana's chief enforcer, Vince Stone (Lee Marvin). She has a grudge of her own, centering on the fact that her beau has left her with only half a face. The brute, who enjoys torturing women, has some famous last words along the lines of "I'm not worried about Debby."



In the 1953 novel by William McClearen on which the movie was based, Bannon is surprised and shocked when Debby takes it upon herself to murder the widow Duncan, and thereby unleash the "big heat" with which she had threatened Logana's syndicate. Lang, who perhaps worried that his message of "take the law into your own hands" might not have come through clearly enough, added a scene not present in the novel. In the film version, Bannon explicitly lays out for Debby just what Mrs. Duncan's role in the whole plot is, and why her death would be "useful." He then gives her a gun. Not much ambiguity there! Having wreaked holy vengeance on the men who wronged her, and avenging the wife of the one man who treated her with respect, Debby dies from a bullet in the back. Not a dignified death, mind you, and it gets harsher when Bannon cradles her dying body in his arms to whisper to her—a heartfelt eulogy to his dead wife! But in this moment of emotional and physical pain, Debby's sacrifice is ennobled. She does not die for her sins. She dies a hero.

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QUICKSAND (1950)

Mickey Rooney gets himself into a heap of trouble by pursuing the wrong woman in the quicksand. Fired jokes about Mickey's many documented love affairs and marriages aside, there's some thing about Rooney pining after a fortune-hunter and getting stung because of it that fits the actor like a glove. This

tight little depiction of a man's moral disintegration was made right around the time Rooney had broken off ties with longtime employer MGM, his box office appeal having sild by the end of the forties. The Mick signed on to do two low-budget features for producer Samuel H. Stiefel. These second-features set the tone for most of his assignments during the early fifties, when he became a hard-working B-picture actor. (The first Stiefel production was an auto-racing picture, *THE BIG WHEEL*, in 1949.) In his autobiography, Rooney dismissed *QUICKSAND* as "aptly titled," but it's more interesting than that. If nothing else, you get to see Rooney and Peter Lorre knock one another around, a moment well worth your time.

Rooney is Dan Brady, an honest garage mechanic, eager to score with a hash house wallress, Vera Novak (Jeanne Cagney). Dan can't be all bad, because one of his pals is played by Jimmie Dodd, who later hosted *THE MICKEY MOUSE CLUB*. On the other hand, you know from the start that Vera's no good, because she has platinum blonde hair, slinks into work to the accompaniment of suggestive saxophone music, and, well, is named "Vera."

In contrast, Dan has a wholesome ex-girlfriend, Helen (Barbara Bates), who still carries a torch for the pint-sized grease monkey and hangs about waiting for him to see the error of his ways. Instead, Dan foolishly takes \$20 from the cash register at work so he can show Vera a good time. Since this is the sort of greedy dame who gazes hungrily at a \$2,000 fur coat in a store window, 20 bucks just ain't gonna cut it with her. Soon Dan finds himself docking a watch he bought on an installment plan, stealing a car, and rolling a drunk named Shorty (Sid Marion) for his wallet. What's worse, he gets on the bad side of Nick, a creepy penny arcade operator

PAGE 46: Mike Ward (John McGuire) meets a STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR (Peter Lorre) in this influential 1940 film noir. PAGE 48 BOTTOM LEFT: Debby Marsh (Gloria Grahame) plugs a "sister under the mink" in *THE BIG HEAT* (1953). PAGE 48 TOP RIGHT: Sealed with steaming coffee by Vince Stone (Lee Marvin), Debby serves up some revenge and finds it good to the last drop. RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM: It's the battle of the half-pints when Dan Brady (Mickey Rooney, clutching Jeanne Cagney) confronts Nick Dramoshag (Peter Lorre) in *QUICKSAND*. It's a romantic quadrangle when Pat Garrett (Thomas Mitchell), Doc Holliday (Walter Huston), and Rio McDonald (Jane Russell) all have the hots for *THE OUTLAW* Billy the Kid (Jack Buetel) in Howard Hughes' torrid Western of 1943. Hughes himself lusted after the young actor—something you won't find in *THE AVIATOR* (2004); P. J. McNeal (James Stewart) tracks down eyewitness to murder Wanda Skutnik (Betty Garde) in *CALL NORTHSIDE 777* (1948); that was no woman, that's my Uncle Fester—Jackie Coogan (with Steve Cochran) plays an undercover cop in *THE BEAT GENERATION* (1959); closeted barrister Melville Farr (Dirk Bogarde, gay in real life) burns an incriminating photograph that reveals his affair with a young man.

played with lizard-like menace by Peter Lorre. (Would you let your children play pinball at a joint run by Peter Lorre?)

Tension derives from anticipating just how deep a hole the hapless Dan is going to dig himself into. You get a sense of spiraling doom for about the first hour. Surprisingly, as the movie reaches its climax, a tone of optimism overcomes the story, depriving the picture of the dark denouement you might have expected (and which might have given it more conviction). Rooney plays in a low-keyed mode throughout, when the more hyperactive Mickey might have been more suitable. James Cagney's sister Jeanne acquits herself well as a heartless manipulator, while Lorre oozes appropriate levels of sleaze, the expected cigarette dangling from his lip. Director/actor Irving Pichel (in the same year he helmed the pioneering sci-fi flick *DESTINATION MOON*) keeps the action moving along efficiently and makes good use of authentic, unglamorous locales, including the famed Santa Monica Pier. Alas, no actual quicksand is seen.

—Barry Monush

THE BEAT GENERATION (1959)

MGM's *THE BEAT GENERATION* unfolds in smoky coffeehouses and espresso-soaked beatnik jazz joints—where no trip is too extreme, Daddy! Even the purest of artistic movements can be corrupted, and this one has a heart of darkness. Stan Hess (Ray Danton) is a sociopath who wouldn't be caught dead in a nine-to-five, but manages to hold court as a hipster-punk who emotes pitiful poetry to syncopating sycophants. When the caffeine and bongos intermittently fail to provide him with enough of a jolt, Hess masquerades as "Arthur Garrett," a clean-cut young man who gets his kicks by raping housewives.

The police soon dub him "The Aspirin Kid" because of his lack of pleading a headache to gain entry into women's homes while their husbands are away. Inspector Dave Callahan (Steve Cochran) is a former vice cop assigned to the case and joined by

his partner Jake Baron (Jackie Coogan). Baron and Callahan's wife, Frances (Fay Spain), are both troubled by her husband's obvious lack of respect for women. Callahan routinely stonewalls their apprehensions, even when admitting that his first wife had been a tramp. When Hess eventually rapes Frances, the inspector must put aside his own prejudices. Apprehended after a brutal underwater fight, the Aspirin Kid can only scream "Women are filthy!" as a pathetic justification for his actions. Callahan is profoundly appalled by Hess' pathological hatred; through exposure to it, he is able to confront his long-standing inner conflicts.

The screenplay, coauthored by Richard Matheson and Lewis Meltzer, evidences an oddly dichotomic quality. The tone practically changes from scene to scene. There are potent explorations of husband-and-wife dynamics, and a subplot about battered women, but the sensitive material is often undermined by episodes bordering on the burlesque. One such sequence depicts Baron and Detective Carlotti (Sid Melton) donning drag to stake out a lovers' lane while coupled with two stud policemen. The volatile scenario is further muddled by a forced attempt to inject "socially edifying value" when Father Donnelly (William Schallert) lectures the pregnant Frances, who's uncertain if the father of her unborn is Callahan or Hess.

The filmmakers aren't afraid of tackling tough issues, but the film's contradictory mood swings leave an aftertaste more bitter than the most potent cup of java. Exploitation devotees probably wouldn't want the subtlety of the picture's main theme, while serious viewers might find themselves distracted by the antics of the ersatz beatniks. The beat environment should have provided a novel noir backdrop, but the possibilities are squandered by the filmmakers' condescension to their subject—Callahan's climactic pursuit of Hess is interrupted by a beatnik hootenanny that suggests a rejected number from an MGM musical.

—John F. Black



A KISS BEFORE DYING (1956)
Fifties hunk watchers get not one but two beefcake pinups—Robert Wagner (in a stunning performance as Bud Corliss) and Jeffrey Hunter (as nerd Gordon Grant)—to ogle in *A KISS BEFORE DYING*. Bud and Gordon move in some of the same circles as the movie begins, but will be locked

spiracy. That conspiracy has compromised his own superiors, though, and they order him to lay off his investigation. Honest to a fault, he disobeys, and so Logana's underlings blow up his wife (played by Marlon's sister, Jocelyn Brando). When he demands a genuine inquiry into his wife's murder, he gets suspended from the force. If anyone is going to seriously confront Logana's organization, Bannon will have to do it himself outside the law.

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tight little depiction of a man's moral disintegration was made right around the time Rooney had broken off ties with longtime employer MGM, his box office appeal having slid by the end of the forties. The Mick signed on to do two low-budget features for producer Samuel H. Stiefel. These second-features set the tone for most of his assignments during the early fifties, when he became a hard-working B-picture actor. (The first Stiefel production was an auto-racing picture, THE BIG WHEEL, in 1949.) In his autobiography, Rooney dismissed QUICK-SAND as "aptly titled," but it's more interesting than that. If nothing else, you get to see Rooney and Peter Lorre knock one another around, a moment well worth your time.

Rooney is Dan Brady, an honest garage mechanic, eager to score with a hash house waitress, Vera Novak (Jeanne Cagney). Dan can't be all bad, because one of his pals is played by Jimmie Dodd, who later hosted THE MICKEY MOUSE CLUB. On the other hand, you know from the start that Vera's no good, because she has platinum blonde hair, slinks into work to the accompaniment of suggestive saxophone music, and, well, is named "Vera."

In contrast, Dan has a wholesome ex-girlfriend, Helen (Barbara Bates), who still carries a torch for the pint-sized grease monkey and hangs about waiting for him to see the error of his ways. Instead, Dan foolishly takes \$20 from the cash register at work so he can show Vera a good time. Since this is the sort of greedy dame who gazes hungrily at a \$2,000 fur coat in a store window, 20 bucks just ain't gonna cut it with her. Soon Dan finds himself hocking a watch he bought on an installment plan, stealing a car, and rolling a drunk named Shorty (Sid Marion) for his wallet. What's worse, he gets on the bad side of Nick, a creepy penny arcade operator

PAGE 46: Mike Ward (John McGuire) meets a STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR (Peter Lorre) in this influential 1940 film noir. PAGE 48 BOTTOM LEFT: Debby Marsh (Gloria Grahame) plugs a "sister under the mink" in THE BIG HEAT (1953). PAGE 48 TOP RIGHT: Scalded with steaming coffee by Vince Stone (Lee Marvin), Debby serves up some revenge and finds it good to the last drop. RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM: It's the battle of the half-pints when Dan Brady (Mickey Rooney, clutching Jeanne Cagney) confronts Nick Dramoshag (Peter Lorre) in QUICKSAND; it's a romantic quadrangle when Pat Garrett (Thomas Mitchell), Doc Holliday (Walter Huston), and Rio McDonald (Jane Russell) all have the hots for THE OUTLAW Billy the Kid (Jack Buetel) in Howard Hughes' *noirish* Western of 1943. Hughes himself lusted after the young actor—something you won't find in THE AVIATOR (2004); P. J. McNeal (James Stewart) tracks down eyewitness to murder Wanda Skutnik (Betty Garde) in CALL NORTHSIDE 777 (1948); that was no woman, that's my Uncle Fester—Jackie Coogan (with Steve Cochran) plays an undercover cop in THE BEAT GENERATION (1959); closeted barrister Melville Farr (Dirk Bogarde, gay in real life) burns an incriminating photograph that reveals his affair with a young man.

played with lizard-like menace by Peter Lorre. (Would you let your children play pinball at a joint run by Peter Lorre?)

Tension derives from anticipating just how deep a hole the hapless Dan is going to dig himself into. You get a sense of spiraling doom for about the first hour. Surprisingly, as the movie reaches its climax, a tone of optimism overcomes the story, depriving the picture of the dark denouement you might have expected (and which might have given it more conviction). Rooney plays in a low-keyed mode throughout, when the more hyperactive Mickey might have been more suitable. James Cagney's sister Jeanne acquits herself well as a heartless mantrap, while Lorre oozes appropriate levels of sleaze, the expected cigarette dangling from his lip. Director/actor Irving Pichel (in the same year he helmed the pioneering sci-fi flick DESTINATION MOON) keeps the action moving along efficiently and makes good use of authentic, unglamorous locales, including the famed Santa Monica Pier. Alas, no actual quicksand is seen.

—Barry Monush

THE BEAT GENERATION (1959)
MGM's THE BEAT GENERATION unfolds in smoky coffeehouses and espresso-soaked beatnik jazz joints—where no trip is too extreme, Daddy! Even the purest of artistic movements can be corrupted, and this one has a heart of darkness. Stan Hess (Ray Danton) is a sociopath who wouldn't be caught dead in a nine-to-five, but manages to hold court as a hipster/poseur who emotes pithy poetry to syncopating sycophants. When the caffeine and bongos intermittently fail to provide him with enough of a jolt, Hess masquerades as "Arthur Garrett," a clean-cut young man who gets his kicks by raping housewives.

The police soon dub him "The Aspirin Kid" because of his m.o. of pleading a headache to gain entry into women's homes while their husbands are away. Inspector Dave Culloran (Steve Cochran) is a former vice cop assigned to the case and joined by

his partner, Jake Baron (Jackie Coogan). Baron and Culloran's wife, Francee (Fay Spain), are both troubled by her husband's obvious lack of respect for women. Culloran routinely stonewalls their apprehensions, even when admitting that his first wife had been a tramp. When Hess eventually rapes Francee, the inspector must put aside his own prejudices. Apprehended after a brutal underwater fight, the Aspirin Kid can only scream "Women are filth!" as a pathetic justification for his actions. Culloran is profoundly appalled by Hess' pathological hatred; through exposure to it, he is able to confront his long-standing inner conflicts.

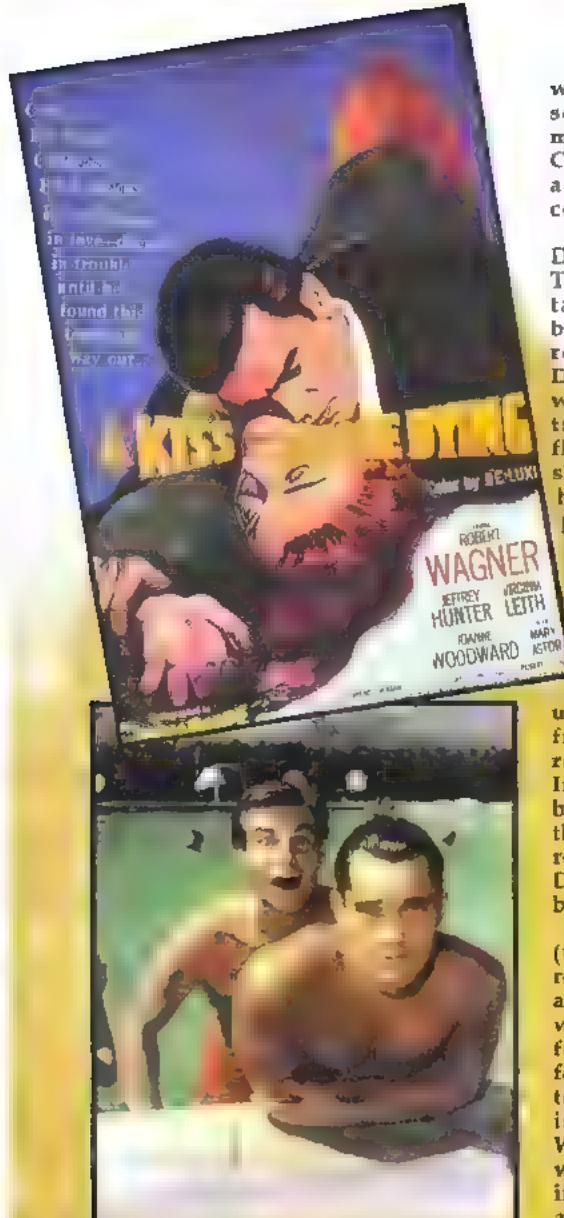
The screenplay, coauthored by Richard Matheson and Lewis Meltzer, evidences an oddly dichotomic quality. The tone practically changes from scene to scene. There are potent explorations of husband-and-wife dynamics, and a subplot about battered women, but the sensitive material is often undermined by episodes bordering on the burlesque. One such sequence depicts Baron and Detective Carlotti (Sid Melton) donning drag to stake out a lovers' lane while coupled with two stud policemen. The volatile scenario is further muddied by a forced attempt to inject "socially redeeming value" when Father Donnelly (William Schallert) lectures the pregnant Francee, who's uncertain if the father of her unborn is Culloran or Hess.

The filmmakers aren't afraid of tackling tough issues, but the film's contradictory mood swings leave an aftertaste more bitter than the most potent cup of java. Exploitation devotees probably wouldn't want the sobriety of the picture's main theme, while serious viewers might find themselves distracted by the antics of the ersatz beatniks. The beat environment should have provided a novel *noir* backdrop, but the possibilities are squandered by the filmmakers' condescension to their subject—Culloran's climactic pursuit of Hess is interrupted by a beatnik hootenanny that suggests a rejected number from an MGM musical.

—John F. Black



A KISS BEFORE DYING (1956)
Fifties hunk watchers get not one but two beefcake pinups—Robert Wagner (in a stunning performance as Bud Corliss) and Jeffrey Hunter (as nerd Gordon Grant)—to ogle in A KISS BEFORE DYING. Bud and Gordon move in some of the same circles as the movie begins, but will be locked



ABOVE: Robert Wagner and Jeffrey Hunter, who costarred in *A KISS BEFORE DYING* (1956), were both products of Hollywood's Hunk Factory. Wagner was the protégé of gay stage and film star Clifton Webb. Hunter, it became known after his death, was bisexual. Under the circumstances, the above publicity photo contains enough subtext to fill the Hollywood Bowl.

in a life and death struggle by the time it ends.

Bud—who was wounded in the war, a standard filmdom rationale for psychotic behavior—is going to college and has a girlfriend, Dorothy Kingship (Joanne Woodward). Dory, as he calls her, is the daughter of Leo Kingship (George Macready), a copper baron. She has a sister named Ellen (Virginia Leith). Dory is pregnant and believes that Bud is going to marry her. Bud, however, has other plans. Revealing her pregnancy would destroy the relationship of Dory and her wealthy father, which would cost Dory her inheritance. (Dory and Ellen's mother

was banished from the family for a sexual affair.) Bud is determined to marry not Dory Kingship, but Kingship Copper. (Oh, such wealth—Dory drives a new copper-colored Thunderbird convertible with turquoise interior!)

Bud eventually agrees to marry Dory, then sets about killing her. Two attempts fail, but finally she takes a flyer off the roof of the very building housing the marriage bureau. Sister Ellen is convinced that Dory's death was not the suicide it was ruled. (Bud arranged for a trumped-up note to explain Dory's flight to oblivion.) A few months later, she persuades her boyfriend to help her prove it. Her boyfriend just happens to be—Bud Corliss!

A KISS BEFORE DYING was filmed in CinemaScope and Color by DeLuxe around the University of Arizona and at the Inspiration Consolidated Copper Company. Producer Robert L. Jacks, son-in-law of 20th Century Fox studio head Darryl F. Zanuck, used many Fox employees both in front of and behind the camera. Lawrence Roman adapted the 1953 novel by Ira Levin. The film was photographed by Lucien Ballard. Lionel Newman wrote the haunting title song (lyrics by Carroll Coates, sung by Dolores Hawkins). Director Gerd Oswald kept things bubbling at a compact 94 minutes.

Veterans Macready and Mary Astor (who plays Bud's clinging mother) already had stellar careers behind them, and Wagner, Woodward, and Hunter went on to considerable success. The future held something else entirely for poor Virginia Leith. She'd play the title role—sometimes known as "Jan in the Pan"—in *THE BRAIN THAT WOULDN'T DIE* (1962), spending hours with her head stuck through a hole in a table and communicating by ESP and eye blinking. Fate is cruel.

—Jack Randall Earles

CALL NORTHSIDE 777 (1948)

In the debate about whether *film noir* constitutes a genre or a style, a picture like *CALL NORTHSIDE 777* serves only to throw fuel on the fire as it fits comfortably into neither of those opposing camps yet stands as an undeniable classic *noir* film. Narratively, this earnest, sincere drama deftly avoids sensationalism. Passing references to gangsters and police corruption are neither serious nor figure in the plot at hand. Far from the traditions of hard-boiled pulp, this true-life tale is quiet, spare, and direct. Modern day pretenders to 777's legacy, such as Clint Eastwood's *TRUE CRIME* (1999), have a tendency to clutter their narratives with dramatic hyperbole. By contrast, director Henry Hathaway's film is content with minimalism, and is all the better for it. This is a film that stares unflinchingly at the world in all its harsh reality, warts and all, but also without exaggeration.

James Stewart stars as McNeal, a cynical Chicago newspaperman in-

vestigating a curious classified ad that promises a \$5,000 reward for information about a cop-killing 11 years previous. (The title comes from the phone number she uses in the ad.) It turns out that, back in 1932, Frank Wiecek (Richard Conte) was sentenced for the crime. The ad was placed by his scrubwoman mother (Kasia Orzazewski), who has saved her earnings all this time in hopes of freeing her unjustly accused son. Skeptical at first, McNeal gradually convinces himself that Wiecek is indeed innocent. Convincing the rest of the world, including angry cops unwilling to give a suspected cop-killer a second chance and a jittery administration fearful of adverse political fallout, becomes McNeal's holy grail.

Still about 10 years away from having his public image deconstructed by Alfred Hitchcock, Stewart is perfectly cast. McNeal is in some ways an amalgam of Stewart's best-known roles. Doggedly trying to prove his case to people unwilling or unable to see things from his point of view, we see shades of L. B. Jeffries from *REAR WINDOW* (1954). Stalling for time during the climax, hoping to soften the hearts of the pardon board with his aw-shucks salesmanship, we see echoes of Jefferson Smith in *MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON* (1939). And in his anxious anticipation of the key evidence that will conclusively prove him right or dead wrong, knowing that everything is riding on this one last ploy and there's not a damn thing he can do now but wait and hope, we see some of Ben McKenna, *THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH* (1956).

The screenplay, credited to Jerome Cady, Jay Dratler, Leonard Hoffman, and Quentin Reynolds, is faithfully adapted from the articles by the real-life McNeal, *Chicago Times* reporter James P. McGuire. The production of the film mirrored McGuire McNeal's obsession with finding the truth, as the conventions of classical Hollywood technique were abandoned in favor of a cinema vérité style that clearly influenced the works of the French New Wave a decade later. Eschewing L.A. soundstages, Hathaway dragged his crew out to Chicago to film at the very places where the real events unfolded, even going so far as to put Richard Conte in the same prison cell where his real-life counterpart had endured his wrongful incarceration. Scenes shot at the actual *Chicago Times* offices and the Chicago police stations seem more like a documentary than a fiction film.

Although the driving force of the picture is its obsessive realism, cinematographer Joe MacDonald does break style for an occasional *noirish* touch. The initial meeting between McNeal and Wiecek's mother is drenched in high-contrast shadows that all but swallow the performers alive—a lit-

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Female on the Beach

An Appreciation by David Del Valle

Joan Crawford, more than any other movie star of her era, epitomized the glamour and charisma the public came to associate with Hollywood royalty. However, Crawford was also a woman with issues, a woman in menopausal crisis dominating her environment against overwhelming odds. This scenario was reflected in both her real life and reel life. By the 1950s, Crawford was fighting not only the studios that created her image, but time itself.

Crawford began the fifties on a high note with her Oscar-nominated performance in *SUDDEN FEAR* (1952), a film in which she is victimized by a psychotic actor (Jack Palance) who plans to hustle her into marriage and murder her for her money. The premise would crystallize later in *FEMALE ON THE BEACH* (1955).

During this period, the Crawford screen persona included a variation on the familiar plot of the shop girl's rise to respectability, embracing the more unsavory elements found in film noir—racketeers, gambling, prostitution, and murder. In 1950, she starred in Warner Bros.'s *THE DAMNED DON'T CRY*, directed by Vincent Sherman (her off-screen lover as well). This film set the tone for all Crawford films to follow. As Ethel Whitehead, she's the naive mother of a small boy. When he's tragically struck down by a truck, Ethel, numb with grief, exits her loveless marriage to try her luck in the Big City. In no time she's courted by both a milquetoast CPA (Kent Smith) and a ruthless mob boss (David Brian). Ethel is dazzled by the power of crime and allows herself to be transformed into the fashionable and enigmatic Lorna Hanson Forbes.

DAMNED established Crawford as an ageless siren whose sex appeal and power over men is unquestionable. Her characters are not without a moral compass, but sometimes one has to rely on a third act to get the message. Except for *TORCH SONG* (1953) and the delirious *JOHNNY GUITAR* (1954), the Crawford films from this period are black-and-white, allowing our heroine to be lit in shadows that crisscross her handsome features

in such a way as to keep time at a distance. The films include *HARRIET CRAIG* (1950), *THIS WOMAN IS DANGEROUS* (1952), *QUEEN BEE* (1955), and *AUTUMN LEAVES* (1956). These custom-made vehicles offer a Crawford who is center stage and supported by no one equal in star power. Her leading men are either on their way up (Cliff Robertson in *AUTUMN LEAVES*) or reliable support (Kent Smith and Barry Sullivan).

By 1955, Crawford was having a fling with Milton Rackmil (the head of Universal) and talk of marriage filled the gossip columns. Never one to miss an opportunity, Joan secured the lead in *FEMALE ON THE BEACH* with perks galore. She had the largest dressing room on the lot and handpicked heartthrob Jeff Chandler—formerly Mr. Boynton to Eve Arden's OUR MISS BROOKS on the radio and, according to Esther Williams, a closet crossdresser—as her leading man.

What makes the film so special is the calculated abandon with which it was put together. No one seemed to care that the storyline involves a male hustler being pimped by an older couple with the unlikely names of Osbert and Queenie (Cecil Kellaway and Natalie Schafer). Few films of this era have such built-in gay camp awareness—and starring Joan Crawford, no less! The dialogue is pure Mart (*THE BOYS IN THE BAND*) Crowley with a dash of John (*The Sexual Outlaw*) Rechy. When Drummond Hall (Chandler) really falls for our Female on the Beach, Osbert and Queenie pick up the studly, well-named Roddy (Ed Fury) as a replacement and show him off to their former protégé and his bride, like a new car—convertible, of course!

The opening shot shows a silhouetted Crawford walking in the sand to the lazy melody of a harmonica. It is quintessential fifties soap—and yet the She Creature could turn up at any moment with Chester Morris in tow! Crawford's films of this period have an offbeat horror film flavor to them. It's no accident that both she and Bette Davis would end up making genuine fright films at the twilight of their careers.

FEMALE ON THE BEACH unfolds like a noirish murder mystery. From a shadowy beach house echo the angry and desperate voices of Osbert and Queenie Sorenson, two middle-aged con artists. Eloise Crandall (Judith Evelyn) is about to take a "swan dive off the top of a brandy bottle" over a gigolo. Faulty railing does the rest—and R.I.P. Mrs. Crandall.

Judith Evelyn was no stranger to melodrama or the macabre. A specialist in neurotic characters, she made her mark on Broadway with *ANGEL STREET* (1941) opposite Vincent Price and later on television with Henry Daniell as the evil husband out to drive his wife mad. Genre fans remember her from Alfred Hitchcock's *REAR WINDOW* (1954) as the touching "Miss Lonelyhearts," and her signature performance as the mute owner of a silent movie theater in *THE TINGLER* (1959). Vincent Price once told this writer that "Judith really was like those neurotic characters she played so well and as a result was not terribly happy in life."

Lynn Markham (Crawford) enters the picture, taking her late husband's residence from the recently departed Mrs. Crandall. It only takes a glance at the empty liquor bottles that the cleaning woman (Helen Heigh) is indiscreetly removing to establish the former tenant as a lush. Despite a vain attempt at a cover-up by the real estate broker, Amy Rawlinson (Jan Sterling), Lynn becomes aware of a male presence in the house—a pipe and jacket are left scattered about and his boat is tied up on her dock.

Lynn dismisses Amy and tries to enjoy her new surroundings—but the weary "Newport Beach cop," Lieutenant Galley (Charles Drake), turns up with the true

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BELLO LEFT. Matt Damon played THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY in the 1999 film based on Patricia Highsmith's 1955 novel of suspense. **RIGHT:** Richard Kiley, John McIntyre, and Lenka Peterson starred in THE PHENIX CITY STORY (1955).

DARK PASSAGES

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eral darkness that envelopes their world. Similarly, the climactic confrontation between McNeil and the one witness whose lies have kept Wiecek in prison is only barely visible in the rich chiaroscuro shadows.

Ultimately more uplifting than most films noir, CALL NORTHSIDE 777 does manage to ably dramatize a classic noir theme: the past is a curse that haunts the present. Crimes committed 11 years ago can still ruin lives today.

—David Kalat

THE OUTLAW (1943)

THE OUTLAW, a quasi-historical, noirish melodrama of Billy the Kid, was intended primarily as an opportunity for millionaire fruitcake Howard Hughes to showcase 21-year-old neophyte Jane Russell's bountiful bosom. Russell, who would later evolve into a fine comic actress and genuine screen goddess opposite Bob Hope in THE PALEFACE (1948), is given little opportunity here to do anything more than smolder and pout.

The real star is Jack Buetel, another unknown, as the Kid. Buetel's acting is on the same level as that commonly associated with Ed Wood's amateur-night fiascoes, but dang if the long and lanky 25-year-old Texan ain't jeest

a junebug in July. For all his macho posturing (reminiscent of nothing so much as a Times Square hustler), this cock of the walk is pure chicken, his androgynous, Athletic Modeling Guild-styled beauty making him a progenitor of such fifties' boy-girls as John Derek and Montgomery Clift. The movie's blatantly homoerotic subtext—such as when Doc Holliday (Walter Huston, giving OUTLAW's best performance) remarks, "Good looking boy like you must have a girl somewhere," and the Kid replies that he doesn't trust 'em, then casually suggests to the craggy old cowpoke, "If you're not fixed up, you can bunk with me tonight"—fits the actor like a pair of skintight Levis.

Still, it's the pneumatic Rio (Russell), who tries to skewer Billy with a pitchfork in revenge for his having murdered her brother, for whom the Kid develops a yen. The twosome spend the remainder of the film trying to kill one another to the tune of the asinine LITTLE RASCALS-style music that punctuates the soundtrack, before riding off into the sunset together. The screenwriters seem much more interested in working out a love triangle between Billy, Doc, and Pat Garrett (Thomas Mitchell), with the Kid coyly admitting to Holliday, "You're the only partner I ever had," as the older man gazes at him adoringly and Garrett seeths with jealousy. ("You stand there with that little snip of a kid against me . . . the oldest and best friend you ever had. And I still would be. If it weren't for him!").

Apart from the sexual shenanigans that have always been its main draw, THE OUTLAW is still a well-made and entertaining Western, thanks to its uncredited director—Howard Hawks.

—Jon Anthony Carr

THE PHENIX CITY STORY (1955)

Like the Warner Bros. crime films of the thirties, THE PHENIX CITY STORY was "torn from the headlines." In June, 1954, Albert Patterson, a lawyer running for attorney general of Alabama, was killed because he opposed the profitable vice industry of Phen-



nix City. A year later, Allied Artists released this powerful work, one that reveals how low-budget features in the fifties could be more dynamic and relevant than the decade's CinemaScope escapistism.

The noir films of the forties often emphasized a character's psychological disorientation and used an expressionistic style to visualize that inner state. In contrast, such fifties films as PHENIX CITY depict social corruption, so their cameras went on location, replacing stylized shadows with ruthless reality. In director Phil Karlson's spare, direct images, PHENIX CITY's sidewalks and storefronts have the undramatic quality of everyday life, as do the "real" people who appear in the film, putting in perspective even the most effective character actors (although John McIntire, Richard Kiley, and Edward Andrews offer fine performances). The result is a truly palpable sense of actuality that heightens the horror of the characters' sometimes casual ruthlessness. This Justice Outraged melodrama surges with passionate intensity.

The impetus for PHENIX CITY may have been current events in Alabama, but in general organized crime was in the news, due to the hearings led by Senator Estes Kefauver and televised in 1950-51. Hollywood soon began exposing urban crime syndicates; 1955 alone saw NEW ORLEANS UNCENSORED, NEW YORK CONFIDENTIAL, CHICAGO SYNDICATE, and INSIDE DETROIT. But the setting of THE PHENIX CITY STORY is more like a small town, where the upright citizens grew up with those who are now the criminals, and they all pass on the street, exchanging pleasantries. PHENIX CITY's vice is "an industry run by men I went to school with," explains the lawyer's son, John Patterson (Kiley).

PHENIX CITY includes a number of thematic threads found in fifties melodramas, threads that reflect—consciously or not—the aura of McCarty-era witch hunts and black-

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Blonde Heat

VIRGINIA MAYO

interviewed by Todd Livingston

Living in Los Angeles, I meet a lot of actors and actresses—more than most folks, actually, since I'm also a filmmaker. There are celebrities everywhere I go.

Normally I remain calm, cool, and collected when I run into the star of the latest forensics drama or the Third Runner-up Hot Guy that the Hot Girl didn't choose for a date, mostly because my area of interest lies in the classic era of motion pictures, when star status relied more on talent than a publicity machine. Every so often here in LA, there are movie memorabilia shows featuring many actors from the glorious, Golden Age of Hollywood. It was at one of these shows that I first met Virginia Mayo. She was in her late seventies and I was surprised to see her. After all, she wasn't just a working actor—she was a genuine Star with a capital "S." She'd worked with Danny Kaye, Bob Hope, Ronald Reagan, James Cagney, Boris Karloff, Peter Lorre, Burt Lancaster,



LEFT: Though Virginia Mayo insisted that she was never a Goldwyn Girl, she can be seen in the background with the rest of Sam Goldwyn's personal chorus in *UP IN ARMS* (1944), starring Danny Kaye and Dinah Shore. RIGHT: Mayo's first starring role was opposite Bob Hope (and Victor McLaglen as The Hook) in *THE PRINCESS AND THE PIRATE* (1944). Hope wooed Mayo for nine reels, only to have her walk off at the climax with a surprise guest—Bing Crosby!

Gregory Peck, Dana Andrews, and dozens of other legendary names.

I arranged an interview through Virginia's daughter Mary, and they invited me to their home in the West Valley. Virginia was a lovely and kind woman who was honestly surprised that people were still interested in her. We talked for hours and it remains a truly special memory, one made all the more poignant by her death on January 17, 2005. But that's the end of the story, and a lot happened getting there.

Born on November 30, 1920, in St. Louis, Missouri, Virginia Clara Jones was the child of a reporter father and

movie-fan mom. Virginia's interest in performing was sparked not only by her mother, but by her paternal aunt, Alice Jones Wientge, who ran an acting school. Following high school graduation, Virginia found work dancing at the St. Louis Municipal Opera and at the Jefferson Hotel. There, she met Andy Mayo, one third of a vaudeville act with his wife and a partner named Normi Morton. Virginia stepped in for the pregnant Mrs. Mayo and, changing her surname, became Virginia Mayo. The vaudeville turn took her to New York and Billy Rose's famed Diamond Horseshoe, where one of the patrons one

night turned out to be a genuine movie mogul—Samuel Goldwyn. Virginia signed with Sam, the King of the Hollywood Malaprop ("Give me a couple of years and I'll make that actress an overnight success"), and the rest was silver screen history—even if Virginia didn't always agree with her own legend...

Virginia Mayo: I was not a Goldwyn Girl! Let's do get it straight! I was brought from New York where Goldwyn had seen me and interviewed me and made a screen test. He sent for me and I came out to Hollywood from New York from a show I was in. I was un-

LEFT: Walter Mitty and Rosalind Van Hoorn (Danny Kaye and Virginia Mayo) battle the baddies (including Boris Karloff as a phony psychiatrist) in *THE SECRET LIFE OF WALTER MITTY* (1947), a rollicking comedy that has little to do with James Thurber's original short story. RIGHT: Dr. Hollingshead (Karloff) tries to convince Walter that he's seeing things, but he's not—Rosalind really is sitting on a chair.



"Danny Kaye was always antagonistic towards me. He kept asking Goldwyn for Ingrid Bergman! Really, it's laughable; comedy was not her forte! She got Oscars for her acting, she was wonderful, but not for her comedy. Danny wanted a bigger star opposite him because it would make him more prestigious. Mr. Goldwyn wouldn't hear of it and he was the last word—always!"

der contract to Mr. Goldwyn for five years. He had the Goldwyn Girls and they were all beautiful ladies—but they didn't have much of a reputation for having talent! (Laughs) I just hate that I'm lumped in with them. I had to be in one picture with the Goldwyn Girls for one scene. I was not a Goldwyn Girl; I was under contract to Goldwyn to be a star actress. He wanted to develop me. *Scarlet Street:* What New York show were you appearing in when Goldwyn signed you for films?

VM: I was appearing at Billy Rose's Diamond Horseshoe. You're probably too young to have seen the Diamond Horseshoe, 'cause it's not running anymore. This was in the forties. Billy Rose used to put on wonderful shows. They were like the Ziegfeld extravaganzas. The Diamond Horseshoe was a beautiful nightclub, really big and with fluted columns. They had two shows a night—elegant shows, beautifully designed and Billy Rose spent a lot of money on them. He was an impresario and he wanted to put on the best. I was with a horse act. My partners went to see Billy and he said, "I only need the girl." My partners said, "Oh, well, we can't break up the act." He said, "Okay, but let me look at the girl." And so I went in and met Mr. Rose and I guess he liked me very much and he hired all of us. It was a wonderful show, I must say. I was there about six months, and everybody was coming down to see me. I was very lucky to get this part because it was a leading role. I danced and sang and I had a great spot in the show, so much so that Billy invited Sam Goldwyn to come down and see me.

SS: Wasn't Billy Rose afraid he'd lose you to the movies?

VM: Not at first, no. Mr. Goldwyn saw me in his office the next day, and he said, "Well, I'd like to screen test you. Would you mind doing that?" And I said, "No, I'd love to do a screen test!" (Laughs) So I did it and Mr. Goldwyn sent for me. By that time Billy Rose was very upset. He'd built the show around me, more or less, and he was very upset that I was leaving. But listen, it's hard to get into the movies and I wasn't going to say no to that offer!

SS: It would have been foolish.

VM: So I left the show and they couldn't find a replacement, because not everybody could do what I did for the money I was getting paid. So I found a girl for them, a girl who could do it all. Then I got on a train—they didn't have airplanes; you went to New York on a train. I got on a train with my little dog, and rode out to California. That was in 1943, and Mr. Goldwyn pro-

ceeded to see that I was introduced to his people and got started with my movie career.

SS: You had minor roles in a number of films, including *FOLLIES GIRL*, *UP IN ARMS*, *PIN UP GIRL*, and *LOST IN A HAREM*, before getting your first star part.

VM: I had to do a screen test for *THE PRINCESS AND THE PIRATE*, which was my first real starring role. It was with Bob Hope. I mean, what a break! I was really delighted to work with Bob Hope. He was the biggest star of comedy at the time, so I was delighted to get the picture.

SS: Did you test with Bob Hope?

VM: No, they wouldn't ask Bob to test, they got a similar type comedy actor and we did the test. It was a very good test, I saw it and I thought that's wonderful—and I got the part!

SS: Were you nervous about doing the picture with Hope?

VM: No, I was delighted to think that my first picture in Hollywood was with a big, big star—Bob Hope! Mr. Goldwyn had the habit of always being on the set, watching. It's terrible when a big, important man like that comes on the set. You get a little shaky. Bob would say to Sam, "Get off the set! Leave her alone; he's great!" (Laughs) Which shows how sweet Bob was.

SS: Was Goldwyn concerned because this was your first starring role?

VM: Possibly. He wanted me to be a movie star right away! (Laughs) That was Sam Goldwyn! He had a coach work with me on the set in case things didn't go right. I worked with this lady all the time and she was wonderful! And I got through the picture and I was delighted and everybody was very happy that I did a good job in it. Sam Goldwyn was bound and determined to make me a movie star. That was his aim in life.

SS: Well, he got what he wanted.

VM: Well, he was very much into that. Nowadays you wouldn't have such an opportunity, I'm afraid, because there are no more moguls like Goldwyn anymore. You can't call anybody a mogul, because they don't have the talent like the older producers had.

They knew what to put on the screen for the public.

They knew who was good when they saw them and they'd give them a screen test and put 'em in a picture if they could deliver. I was so lucky to

be with Goldwyn. If I'd been contracted by Fox or MGM I wouldn't have had the personal attention that Mr. Goldwyn gave me. He was calling me in his office all the time to show me some film I'd done well or not well, he'd take me into the projection room and we'd look at the film and he'd say, "Now, that was good! Keep on working in that direction." He was just wonderful to me. I didn't have a car when I first came to California. One night the Goldwyns were having a dinner party, so Mrs. Goldwyn came to my apartment and picked me up and took me to their house.

SS: That really was the personal touch!

VM: She liked me. Well, she was rooting for me, anyway. The Goldwyns were probably the top society people in the town. I went to their house and she seated me at this big table, right next to George Cukor! Well, I knew he was a big director, but I was so shy; I didn't know what to say to him. I was sort of tongue-tied. But I enjoyed the experience, and then Mrs. Goldwyn took me home. She really was wonderful she was to me.

SS: Before you made *THE PRINCESS AND THE PIRATE*, you had a bit part in *UP IN ARMS*, Danny Kaye's first film. That's the scene you did with the Goldwyn Girls.

SS: Goldwyn had another actress under contract—Constance Dowling. She did the part in *UP IN ARMS*. I was tested, but I wasn't right for it so I didn't do that picture with Danny. Mr. Goldwyn was very nice to both of us. He sent us

Continued on page 66





Sexual ambivalence is bound up inextricably with self-ambivalence, and the theme of unstable, secret identities and alternate selves recur throughout Stoker's published works. The theme of the divided self and the paradoxes of sexual identity are dealt with openly on several occasions in his later books. In *Famous Impostors* (1910), Stoker examines the true histories of women who masqueraded as men, and the putative story of a man who became a woman (in this case, the strange, persistent conspiracy legend positing Elizabeth I as a male transvestite). In his novel *The Man* (1905), Stoker presents a female heroine named Stephen, born to parents who desired a boy. But however far Stoker's subjects stray from established social and sexual norms, the dominant social order is always reasserted. Drawn to Castle Dracula, fascinated by its threats and possibilities, Stoker always flees its ambiguous confines. Jonathan Harker writes in his diary as he prepares his escape, "God's mercy is better than that of these monsters, and the precipice is steep and high. At its foot a man may sleep as a man." Despite his admiration for *Macbeth*, Stoker the writer has scant use for spirits who might unsex him.

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evokes—manipulates, sustains but never finally represents—is that Dracula will seduce, penetrate, drain another male." Throughout the story, in Craft's view, the homoerotic impulse "achieves representation as a monstrous heterosexuality." The novel's climactic vampire attack, significantly, in a thinly veiled *menage à trois* witnessed by Dr. Seward, Dracula crawls quite literally into the Harkers' marriage bed. Fluids commingle while the unconscious husband blocks out the implications.

On the bed beside the window lay Jonathan Harker, his face flushed, and breathing heavily as though in a stupor. Kneeling on the near edge of the bed facing outwards was the white-clad figure of his wife. By her side stood a tall, thin man clad in black. His face was turned from us, but the instant we saw it we all recognized the Count.

With his left hand he held both Mrs. Harker's hands, keeping them away with her arms at full tension; his right hand gripped her by the back of the neck, forcing her face down on his bosom. Her white nightdress was smeared with blood, and a thin stream trickled down the man's bare breast, which was shown by his torn-open dress. The attitude of the two had a terrible resemblance to a child forcing a kitten's nose into a saucer of milk to compel it to drink.

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Doubling and splitting of identity is associated in clinical terms variously with the inability to escape extreme anxiety or physical violation, or to reconcile cruelly paradoxical circumstances—all of which have their thematic resonances in *Dracula*. Commentators

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The event was the trial of Oscar Wilde.

Wilde and Stoker present a fascinating set of Victorian bookends, shadow-mirrors in uneasy reciprocal orbits. Both were Dubliners, both attended Trinity College and were steeped in literature and theatre. At Trinity Stoker sponsored Wilde's membership in the Philosophical Society. Wilde's parents were favorably impressed with Stoker, and once even entertained him at their home on Christmas day after Oscar had matriculated at Oxford. Both young men were devoted admirers of Henry Irving and at an early age both would approach him in the hopes of advancing their careers (only one would succeed).

Both idealized Walt Whitman and on separate occasions both make repeated pilgrimages to America to meet him. Both would write a masterwork of macabre fiction portraying archetypal title characters who remain supernaturally young by draining the life force from Victorian innocents. Both were attracted to literary themes of doubles, masks, and boundaries in general.

Most significantly, both loved the same woman.

The dowerless, but "exquisitely pretty" Florence Balcombe became the object of Wilde's affection in the summer of 1875. The 16-year-old beauty from Clontarf was his first infatuation, he escorted her to church, drew her portrait, wrote her poetry, and by Christmas presented her with a small gold cross inscribed with their names. The 20-year-old Wilde, unfortunately, was as penniless as his Florrie, and an engagement was never formalized.

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PAGE 57 Frank Langella played DRACULA — *as* — onto the stage. LEFT AND ABOVE: THE ORIGINAL BROADWAY PRODUCTION OF DRACULA (1927) FEATURED EDWARD VAN SLOAN (VAN HELSING), DOROTHY PETERSON (LUCY), TERENCE NEIL (JONATHAN HARKER), HERBERT RUNSTON (DR. SEWARD), AND NEDDA HARRIGAN (WELLS). RIGHT: VAN HELSING AND HARKER CONFRONT THE LORD OF THE UNDEAD AND RENFIELD (BERNARD JUKES), HIS DEAD TO THE WORLD TOAD.



LEFT: THE SAME LINEUP AS THE PREVIOUS PHOTO. PAGE 58: BERNARD JUKES CAMPED HEAVILY TO PLAY RENFIELD IN UNIVERSAL'S 1931 FILM VERSION OF DRACULA, BUT LOST OUT TO DWIGHT FRYE. PHOTOS OF JUKES ARE OFTEN MISTAKEN FOR THOSE OF FRYE IN HORROR HISTORY. RIGHT: RENFIELD AND SEWARD WATCH AS VAN HELSING MAKES OUT HIS CLAIM AS A VAMPIRE HUNTER. HARKER AND LUCY ARE ROMANTIC.

subplot simply not to draw comparisons to Wilde. Wilde's detractors of the 1890s often resorted to imagery reflecting the evolutionary anxieties that permeate *Dracula*. Wilde was frequently cartooned on ever-descending rungs of the evolutionary ladder. As early as 1882, the *Washington Post* depicted him as "The Wilde[er] Man of Borned," a missing link to the simian realm. Later lampoons cast him as a pig, a reptile, a fish, and finally, an invertebrate. As Horace Wyndham recalled in *The Novelists*, Wilde's "almost leaden-coloured" face had "heavy pouches under the eyes, and thick blubbery lips. Indeed, he rather resembled a fat white slug." There was something curiously repulsive and unhealthy in his whole appearance. The description is not far removed from Stoker's depiction of Dracula in his first box; his eyes "set amongst swollen flesh, for the lids and pouches underneath were bloated . . . [He] lay like a filthy leech, exhausted with his repletion."

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In any event, as Stoker was deep in the composition of *Dracula*, his wife's former suitor was being branded a sexual monster in a collective social exorcism. Given the unmistakable sexual preoccupations of his work, is it possible Stoker was unaligned? Where were the feverish sentiments expressed to Walt Whitman now?

Stoker's connection to Wilde, along with his devotion to Henry Irving, his passion for Walt Whitman, and the strangely displaced and coded sexuality of *Dracula* inevitably gave birth to a cottage industry of speculation about Stoker's sexual orientation. Like so much else about *Dracula*, this is a question that can never be authoritatively answered — and so, of course, only invites more speculation.

Dracula's publication was marked by one final, and presumably unintentional, Wildean irony. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* had featured a notorious French novel with a yellow cover to which Stoker was attracted, the literary madonna Aubrey Beardsley self-directed was called *The Yellow Book* in homage, and a great deal of comment was caused at the time of Oscar Wilde's arrest by the reports that he carried off to jail a book with a yellow wrapper (it turned out to be nothing special). *Dracula* would soon join this notorious company of badniks; Constable issued the book in a bright yellow cover in May 1897.

Oddly, or perhaps predictably, the moral guardians of Victorian England found nothing objectionable in *Dracula* regarding their brick-and-loathsome putrid indecency — in what was said and disgusting for a work like *Islands of Glass*, which dared to deal openly with venereal disease. *Dracula* received mixed reviews, typical of which was the *Attucks*' appraisal, which lauded Stoker's characterization while praising the book's "immense" energy: "his object, assuming it to be ghastliness, is fairly well fulfilled."

But a few readers found more to chew on. As one interviewer noted, "In a recent leader on *Dracula*, published in a provincial newspaper, it was suggested that high moral lessons might be learned from the book. Asked Mr. Stoker whether he had written with a purpose, but on this point he would give no definite answer, 'I suppose that every book of the kind must contain some lesson,' he remarked, 'but I prefer that readers should find it out for themselves.' A bishop's wife raised the spectre of Wilde when she wrote Stoker, praising *Dracula* as 'an allegory of sin' aimed at 'those whose belles-lettres repel.'

Stoker may have taken the amusement in attempts to ferret out hidden meanings in *Dracula*. A review in *The Stage* suggested "out of nowhere" that Stoker "brings in most of the motifs, the stabbing of women recently notorious in London." The lack of the Ripper murders of 1888 are now here. Indeed, he in the novel, but *The Stage's* suggestion may well have prompted Stoker to add a blinding legend at the end to the Icelandic translation of 1901, in which he hints that Count Dracula's crimes "appear to have originated from the same source, and at which time created much repugnance in people everywhere as the notorious murders of Jack the Ripper." Stoker also took the occasion to assure the reader that the other principal characters were actual persons known to him.

It is remarkable, too, that *Dracula* has never been attacked as blasphemous, despite its perverse and complicated undermining and inversion of Christian symbols and motifs; the novel is a veritable black mass in book form. Curiously, an indirect connection may have also existed between Stoker and Oscar Wilde's wife, Constance, who (possibly as an escape from her determin-

rating marriage) was an enthusiastic member of a secret occult society, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a magical offshoot of Rosicrucianism whose members included Yeats, Swinburne, and, briefly, the notorious Aleister Crowley. Though never substantiated, accounts would persistently name Stoker as a member as well. The Golden Dawn attracted numerous men and women of accomplishment who would have been well known to Stoker, and his supernatural fiction reveals more than a passing familiarity with esoteric lore. Hermetic symbols and iconography became associated with *Dracula* almost from its first publication, with or without Stoker's knowledge. The first paperback abridgment of the book, published by Constable, features a cover design in a dense symbolic style reminiscent of a Tarot card, and the illustrator of the 1912 Hodder & Stoughton edition would paint a cover in which the classical shapes of a pentagon had been superimposed into *Dracula's* flowing cap. A kind of secret visual handshake results with specific meaning, to the initiated.

Stoker's contract with Constable required him to secure a copy of the book in the United States. It was a daunting task for European writers who did not yet have an American publisher. As was unauthorized stage adaptations of *Dracula*, a copy righted work could be more or less a red flag to U.S. law.

If nothing else, *Dracula* is a quintessential story of power and control, and Stoker's early attempts to retain legal control over his vampire foreshadowed many struggles to come. According to the trade publication *The Booksman*, *Dracula* "had some curious vicissitudes in the United States. At first no American publisher would take it and Bram Stoker himself went to consider able expense in copyrighting it in this country. Time went on, and it looked as if this money — hard-earned, as was all Stoker's money — would be utterly wasted." One of the more onerous legal requirements was that the protected work needed to be printed in America (the United States was not then party to the Berne Convention, which simplified many such hurdles for participation in 1886). Stoker was unable to immediately arrange for American publication, Doubleday & McClure would not bring out the book until the fall of 1899.

Perhaps in response to the advice of his publishers (in correspondence on the matter he signed "Bram"), Stoker may have taken his own protective action. Stoker had become a baronet in 1890, prided himself on retaining no literary representation possibly not the best idea in retrospect. "Mr. Stoker does not find it necessary to publish through a literary agent in the U.S.," he reportedly always seemed to him, he says, that an author with an ordinary business capacity can do better for himself than through any agent. "Some men now-a-days



PAGE 57: Frank Langella played DRACULA on both the stage (1977) and screen (1979). LEFT: The original Broadway production of DRACULA (1927) featured Edward Van Sloan (Van Helsing), Dorothy Peterson (Lucy), Terence Neil (Jonathan Harker), Herbert Runston (Dr. Seward), and Nedda Harrigan (Wells). RIGHT: Van Helsing and Harker confront the Lord of the Undead and Renfield (Bernard Jukes), his dead to the world toadie.

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Nonetheless, Florence and Oscar remained on friendly terms, and she received him at her Sunday salons. In June 1888, when *Under the Sunset* was still Stoker's only published volume of fiction, and a self-subsidized one at that, Wilde dispatched to Florence a copy of his own book of fairy tales, *The Happy Prince* ("I hope you will like them, simple though they are . . . With kind regards to Bram"). When *Salome* was published in French, he sent her an inscribed copy of the Paris first edition (with its "decadent" Aubrey Beardsley illustrations) adding his perfunctory regards to Stoker. In retrospect, considering the artist's flair for the demonic, it is unfortunate indeed that Beardsley was never given the opportunity to illustrate *Dracula*.

Dracula may contain a connection to Wilde's circle in the name of the vampire's English residence, Carfax. Wilde's first male lover and lifelong friend was Robert Ross, an art critic and codirector of a gallery in Ryder Street that was a focal point for artists, like Beardsley, who made no pretense of conventional sexuality. Ross' gallery, whose name alone, no doubt, connoted the variant sensibilities of its artists, also happened to be called Carfax. Whether Ross was making a conscious allusion to *Dracula* is a matter of speculation, but the gallery was certainly well-known, and Stoker was nothing if not well-connected in artistic circles.

In any event, as Stoker was deep in the composition of *Dracula* his wife's former suitor was being branded a sexual monster in a collective social exorcism. Given the unmistakable sexual preoccupations of his work, is it possible Stoker was unaffected? Where were the feverish sentiments expressed to Walt Whitman now?

Stoker's connection to Wilde, along with his devotion to Henry Irving, his passion for Walt Whitman, and the strangely displaced and coded sexuality of *Dracula* inevitably gave birth to a cottage industry of speculation about Stoker's sexual orientation. Like so much else about *Dracula*, this is a question that can never be authoritatively answered -- and so, of course, only invites more speculation.



LEFT: The same lineup as the previous photo on Page 58. Bernard Jukes campaigned heavily to play Renfield in Universal's 1931 film version of DRACULA, but lost out to Dwight Frye. Photos of Jukes are often mistaken for those of Frye in horror histories. RIGHT: Renfield and Seward watch as Van Helsing stakes out his claim as a vampire hunter. Harker and Lucy wax romantic.

Dracula's publication was marked by one final, and presumably unintentional, Wildean irony. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* had featured a notorious French novel with a yellow cover to which its hero is attracted; the literary magazine Aubrey Beardsley art-directed was called *The Yellow Book* in homage, and a great deal of comment was caused at the time of Oscar Wilde's arrest by the reports that he carried off to jail a book with a yellow wrapper (it turned out to be nothing special). *Dracula* would soon join this notorious company in jaundice; Constable issued the book in a bright yellow cover in May 1897.

Oddly, or perhaps all too predictably, the moral guardians of Victorian England found nothing objectionable in *Dracula*, reserving their brickbats of "loathsome . . . putrid indigorum . . . unwholesome and disgusting" for a work like Ibsen's *Ghosts*, which dared to deal openly with venereal disease. *Dracula* received mixed reviews, typical of which was the *Athenaeum*'s appraisal, which faulted Stoker's characterizations while praising the book's "immense" energy: "his object, assuming it to be ghastliness, is fairly well fulfilled."

But a few readers found more to chew on. As one interviewer noted, "In a recent reader on 'Dracula,' published in a provincial newspaper, it is suggested that high moral lessons might be gathered from the book. I asked Mr. Stoker whether he had written with a purpose, but on this point he would give no definite answer, 'I suppose that every book of the kind must contain some lesson,' he remarked; 'but I prefer that readers should find it out for themselves.' A bishop's wife raised the spectre of Wilde when she wrote Stoker, praising *Dracula* as "an allegory of sin" aimed at "those whose belles-lettres repel." Stoker may have taken some amusement in attempts to ferret out hidden meanings in *Dracula*. A review in *The Stage* suggested out of nowhere—that Stoker "brings in, mutatis mutandis, the stabbing of women recently notorious in London." The Jack the Ripper murders of 1888 are nowhere alluded to in the novel, but *The Stage*'s suggestion may well have prompted Stoker to add a blarney-laden introduction to the Icelandic translation of 1901, in which he hints that Count Dracula's crimes "appear to have originated from the same source, and at which time created as much repugnance in people everywhere as the notorious murders of Jack the Ripper." Stoker also took the occasion to assure the reader that the other principal characters were actual persons known to him.

It is remarkable, too, that *Dracula* has never been attacked as blasphemous, despite its perverse and complicated undermining and inversion of Christian symbols and motifs; the novel is a veritable black mass in book form. Curiously, an indirect connection may have also existed between Stoker and Oscar Wilde's wife, Constance, who (possibly as an escape from her deteriorating



marriage) was an enthusiastic member of a secret occult society, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a magical offshoot of Rosicrucianism whose members included Yeats, Swinburne, and, briefly, the notorious Aleister Crowley. Though never substantiated, accounts would persistently name Stoker as a member as well. The Golden Dawn attracted numerous men and women of accomplishment who would have been well-known to Stoker, and his supernatural fiction reveals more than a passing familiarity with esoteric lore. Hermetical symbols and iconography became associated with *Dracula* almost from its first publication, with or without Stoker's knowledge. The first paperback abridgment of the book, published by Constable, features a cover drawing in a dense symbolic style reminiscent of a Tarot card, and the illustrator of the 1912 Rider reissue would paint a cover in which the classical shape of a phoenix has been superimposed into *Dracula*'s flowing cape. A kind of secret visual handshake results, with special meanings to the initiated.

Stoker's contract with Constable required him to secure a copyright in the United States, then a daunting task for European writers who did not yet have an American publisher. As with unauthorized stage adaptations, an uncopied work could be more or less a red flag for piracy.

If nothing else, *Dracula* is a quintessential story of power and control and Stoker's early attempts to retain legal authority over his vampire foreshadowed many struggles that would follow. According to the trade publication *The Bookman*, *Dracula* "had some curious vicissitudes in the United States. At first no American publisher would take it and Bram Stoker himself went to considerable expense in copyrighted it in this country. Time went on, and it looked as if this money—hard-earned, as was all Stoker's money—would be utterly wasted." One of the more onerous legal requirements was that the protected work needed to be printed in America (the United States was not then party to the Berne Convention, which modified many such hurdles for participating countries in 1886). Stoker was unable to immediately arrange for American publication; Doubleday & McClure would not bring out the book until the fall of 1899.

Perhaps in response on the advice of his publishers (no correspondence on the matter has surfaced), Stoker may have taken his own preemptive action. Stoker, who had become a baronet in 1890, prided himself on retaining no literary representation, possibly not the best idea in retrospect. "Mr. Stoker does not find it necessary to publish through a literary agent," an 1897 interviewer reported. "It always seems to him, he says, that an author with an ordinary business capacity can do better for himself than through any agent. Some men now-a-days

are making ten thousand [pounds] a year by their novels, and it seems hardly fair that they should pay ten or five per cent of this great sum to a middleman. By a dozen letters or so in the course of the year they could settle all their literary business on their own account." "Though Mr. Stoker did not say so," the interviewer concluded, I am inclined to think that the literary agent is to him a nineteenth century vampire."

But such a vampire, especially one with American connections, might have served him well. Stoker's own efforts to protect *Dracula* in America are rife with irregularities. The U.S. Copyright Office recorded a curious registration by "Bram Stoker, Dublin, Ireland" for *Dracula*, dated "March 15—April 12th, 1899," rather than for a specific date of publication. There was no further explanation, except a penciled notation in the Copyright office's card catalogue that two copies of the American hardcover were received in September 1901 "to complete copyright," nearly two years after Doubleday & McClure's edition made its debut. The March 15—April 12 reference seems inexplicable until one counts the days—27, exactly the number of chapters in *Dracula*.

In other words, the novel took more inspiration from *Varney the Vampyre* than merely its subject. In the time-honored tradition of the penny dreadful, *Dracula* seems to have made its first appearance on American shores in serialization. And, indeed, at least one of the publisher's 1899 advertisements touted the book as having "much success in England, and as a serial in America." But the precise form of this serialization has proved maddeningly elusive. The Copyright office has no record of deposit copies. None have ever surfaced in rare book circles or on the auction market. Previously published claims that the serial appeared in the *New York Sun* are simply not supported by the microfilm record. And the possibility that the serial was printed in any newspaper becomes problematic in light of common publishing practice. Newspaper serializations of novels were typically published in weekly chapters either in Sunday editions, or in weekday installments during the week, but never in combination. To publish a complete serial in 27 sequential days was a practical impossibility.

How, then, did Stoker manage to publish this phantom incarnation of *Dracula*? One possibility is that he personally paid for the printing and insertion of individual chapters as a supplement to a daily paper, perhaps utilizing the American printing plates and thus complying with the legal demand for American manufacture. Even in today's accelerated world of computerized production, books are still typeset months before official publication. Further, it is inconceivable that Stoker would have absorbed the enormous costs of typesetting the book from scratch. Alternately, separate chapters could have been sold or otherwise distributed in extremely limited numbers to meet the technical definitions of "publication." Other British authors of the time found even stranger ways to circumvent the Byzantine traps of American copyright law. For example, the turn-of-the-century fantasist Henry Hope Hodgson had abbreviated American versions of his novels privately printed and sold, sometimes in editions of less than 20 copies, solely to protect copyright. A similarly token "publication" on Stoker's part, in whatever form, would go far in explaining why no copies of the 1899 serialization seem to have survived, and, (assuming their inclusion as a limited supplement), would not be included in official archives of newspapers like the *New York Sun*.

The truth may never be fully known, but the episode would be only the first in an upcoming century of copyright conundrums and other contentious legal disputes over *Dracula*.

Oddly, given Stoker's dazzling array of press contacts as Henry Irving's transatlantic front man, the

Doubleday & McClure edition of *Dracula* was only sparsely reviewed in America, though the notices were positive. The *San Francisco Chronicle* called it "One of the most powerful novels of the day" and "a superb tour de force which stamps itself upon the memory." The *Critic* called it "a most weird and gruesome tale, in which those who love to sup upon horrors will find material for a dozen hearty meals. Count Dracula, the human vampire, is a fiend fit to make the blood of the most hardened horror-lover run cold. The mixture of nineteenth century fact with medieval fancy is cleverly done." Despite *Dracula's* low media profile, according to *The Bookman*, "from the very first its sales were enormous, not only in the States, but in Canada also."

Dracula sold steadily but did not make Stoker a wealthy man. He and Florence were dogged by financial troubles: both the Lyceum's fiscal base and Irving's health were failing. The theatre suffered a devastating fire to its stock of scenery and costumes. Stoker wrote several more books, but none achieved the success of *Dracula*, the dynamics of which he perhaps never understand well enough to repeat. There has been speculation, on slight but interesting evidence, that Stoker may well have intended a *Dracula* sequel. The American writer Roger Sherman Hoar (the onetime governor of Massachusetts), purportedly said that "Stoker told me he planned to bring Dracula over to America in a different story." Sometime near publication, Stoker spared Castle Dracula, which, in the novel's typescript, was utterly destroyed in a volcanic explosion following Dracula's apparent death. The vampire is "killed" in a manner never prescribed by Professor Van Helsing—not by wooden stake, decapitation, and garlic stuffed in the mouth, but rather by a quick stabbing and throat slashing by a pair of knives. Dracula is described as crumbling into dust, though we already know he has the ability to take the form of dust motes. In 1902, perhaps aware of *Dracula's* irregularities, Owen Wister, the best-selling author of *The Virginian*, announced plans to write an American vampire opus in the manner of *Dracula*, though the project came to naught.

Stoker's own attempts to duplicate the *Dracula* magic, as in 1903's resuscitated mummy melodrama *The Jewel of Seven Stars* or 1909's *The Lady of the Shroud* (in which a woman suffering from catalepsy is suspected of vampirism), rang largely hollow.

Henry Irving died in 1905, following a performance of *Becket*, and it was Stoker himself (with some assistance) who closed the eyes of the corpse. Stoker's description of Irving's appearance in death does contain some echoes his description of Dracula, as well as an intimation of immortality: "His face looked very thin and the features sharp as he lay there with his chest high and his head fallen back; but there was none of the usual ungracefulness of death. The long iron-grey hair had fallen back, showing the great height of his rounded forehead. The bridge of his nose stood out sharp and high."

Shortly after Irving's death, Stoker suffered a stroke, as if in some sympathetic connection with his lost mentor and alter ego. The attack left him unconscious for twenty-four hours, and weakened and visually impaired thereafter. Stoker was also ill with gout and Bright's disease, a degenerative kidney disorder. With the aid of a magnifying glass to help him read and write, he completed his *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving* (1906), a two-volume account of both men's years at the Lyceum. Whatever hopes Stoker may have had for a creative collaboration with Irving were realized in this volume, which fused and superimposed their lives forever.

On April 1, 1906, a columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle* noted that "Stoker, for many years, directed the business end of Irving's tours. There has never

been word of Stoker's taking more than casual interest in the actual staging of plays, yet it is said, and apparently in good faith, that he has been invited to become stage manager of one of the 'artistic' theatres which 'society', in the whirligig of its jealousies, plans to build in this city." The unsigned piece went on, a bit cynically, about the current state of the San Francisco stage. "Before Stoker is pressed for a contract it might be profitable to come here and report on conditions as they exist. . . . But Mr. Stoker has a weakness for the joke that may lead him to accept the offer. This is as much to be desired as the other. In either pole his geniality would add to the diversion which the public already is finding in these proposed temples of high art."

A few weeks later the question was rendered moot as San Francisco was destroyed by one of the most theatrical natural disasters in history.

With the loss of his Lyceum position, Stoker turned to journalism for much needed income. Winston Churchill granted him a rare interview in 1908. "'I hate being interviewed,' Churchill told Stoker. 'But I have to break the rule for you, for you were a friend of my father.' Then he gracefully offered another reason, personal to myself: 'And because you are the author of *'Dracula.'*'

Despite his renown, nothing to rival *Dracula* ever appeared. He published other, unmemorable novels, literal potboilers for the once-struggling author, no longer young. Stoker's final book, *The Lair of the White Worm* (1911), is distinguished (if that is the word) by an almost hallucinogenic misogyny, focusing on the vampire-like Lady Arabella and her noxious and transparently emblematic "snake's hole," the smell of which Stoker compares to "the drainage of war hospitals, of slaughterhouses, the refuse of dissecting rooms . . . the sourness of chemical waste and the poisonous effluvia of the bilge of a water-logged ship whereupon a multitude of rats had been drowned." The destroyed phallic worm of the novel's title is an image of physical corruption: "The whole surface of the fragments, once alive, was covered with insects, worms and vermin of all kinds. The sight was horrible enough, but, with the awful smell added, was simply unbearable. The Worm's hole appeared to breathe forth death in its most repulsive forms."

The Lair of the White Worm was hardly Stoker's first public expression of sexual revulsion. Beyond his demonization of female desire in *Dracula*, he had also taken up a censorious, antisex battle cry in a 1908 essay, in which he proclaimed that "the only emotions which in the long run harm are those arising from sex impulses . . ." This particular essay, attacking the "plague-spot" of decadence in fiction reveals Stoker as almost hysterically priggish—protesting too much, as a character in a Henry Irving production might observe.

Bram Stoker died April 20th, 1912, the same week the *Titanic* went to the bottom of the Atlantic. Stoker's great-nephew and biographer Daniel Farson stirred controversy with his 1976 book *The Man Who Wrote Dracula*, in which he pointed out that Stoker's death certificate listed "Locomotor Ataxy 6 months" as the primary cause of death, along with "Granular Contracted Kidney—Exhaustion." Locomotor ataxia (as the term is more usually spelled) had and has a specific medical meaning: the loss of muscle control caused by tertiary syphilis. This, coupled with Farson's speculation that Stoker, frustrated by a sexless marriage, acquired the disease from prostitutes, offended certain Stoker descendants, who had assisted his research. It is perhaps not surprising that the next Stoker biography written with family cooperation, Barbara Belford's *Bram Stoker: A Biography of the Author of Dracula* (1996), refutes the syphilis theory, maintaining that the condition was routinely overdiagnosed in Victorian times.

Continued on page 80

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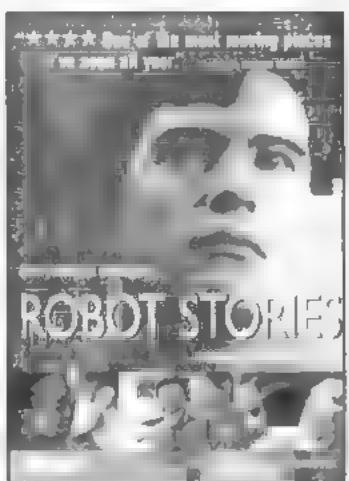
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BOOK ENDS

The Scarlet Street Review of Books

SMIRK, SNEER AND SCREAM

Mark Clark

McFarland & Co., 2004

Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640

257 pages—\$39.95

Bela Lugosi fans are going to be calling for Mark Clark's blood after reading *Smirk, Sneer and Scream: Great Acting in Horror Cinema*. The chapter entry covering the career highs and lows of the Hungarian actor begins with a quote from a review of *THE HUMAN MONSTER* (1939, a.k.a. *DARK EYES OF LONDON*) in *The New York Times*: "All Mr. Lugosi has to do is look at people and they get either hypnosis or cramps from laughing."

It's not the sort of thing diehard Lugosiphiles like to hear, but at least Clark follows it up with a fair share of praise for "Poor Bela," never descending to the cheap shots of earlier, less skilled film historians. Nevertheless, he also deftly nails the conceits of the actor's champions and apologists. ("Lugosiphiles tend unilaterally to categorize egregious overacting as 'charismatic.'")

Elsewhere in this eminently readable, well-reasoned examination of great acting in fright films, Clark tackles Boris Karloff (understandably, his favorite), Lionel Atwill, the Chaney Senior and Junior, Peter Lorre, Vincent Price, Peter Cushing, and a host of other horror stars. Another section of the book focuses on nonhorror stars who made a mark in the genre, including Fredric March (1932's *DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE*), Charles Laughton (1933's *ISLAND OF LOST SOULS*), Claude Rains (1933's *THE INVISIBLE MAN*), Anthony Perkins (1960's *PSYCHO*), and Haley Joel Osment (1999's *THE SIXTH SENSE*). And

"Yes, Gerard Butler is prettier, but I'll always have a soft spot in my heart for you."



the final section "brings on the beautiful girls:" Gloria Holden (1936's *DRACULA'S DAUGHTER*), Simone Simon (1942's *CAT PEOPLE*), and Sissy Spacek (1976's *CARRIE*), among others.

In an era when practically everyone seems to have a horror film book in them (but not the good sense to leave it there), Clark delivers the goods with clear, concise writing and provocative opinions. A love for the genre isn't enough to produce a good book; one needs the talent to go with it. Mark Clark has it in spades. But be warned—watch your back when you're in a roomful of Lugosi fans, Mr. Clark, and don't accept any gift bottles of cologne for "the tender part of your neck."

—Richard Valley

THE IMMORTAL COUNT

Arthur Lennig

The University Press of Kentucky, 2003

548 pages—\$100.00

Boris Karloff fans are going to be calling for Arthur Lennig's blood after reading *The Immortal Count: The Life and Films of Bela Lugosi*—a much expanded version of Arthur Lennig's legendary and long out of print, *The Count* (1974). And even this reviewer—who prefers Lugosi to Karloff by a wide margin—would be hard pressed to entirely blame them.

Lennig relates a story told by the late producer Alex Gordon, to the effect that a 1950s film project starring Karloff, Lugosi, and Lon Chaney Jr. was scuttled because the British star chose not to work again with the Hungarian. "One can well wonder what was going on under the rich and comfortable British actor's polite facade," Lennig writes.

"He knew Lugosi's desperate straits and yet chose not to help him." While I've always thought Karloff's "poor Bela" attitude condescending, it never occurred to me that it was Karloff's *duty* to undertake a film just because it would help Lugosi (or Chaney come to that).

There's an understandable anti-Karloff atmosphere that permeates much of the book and often threatens to undermine what is otherwise a major contribution to Lugosi scholarship—possibly the single greatest contribution to date, at least insofar as a biographical study is concerned.

In some respects, the book may not entirely please Lugosiphiles either. Dealing with Lugosi's body of work, Lennig can be rather harsh about—or at least dis-

missive of—many films that are regarded fondly by others. Assessing *NIGHT OF TERROR* (1933) as "more terrible than terrifying" isn't very edifying, nor is falling back on that standard claim of it being a "waste of his talent." It's a pattern that Lennig tends to follow in his critical assessments, which seem grounded not in genre terms, but in very mainstream viewpoints. Referring to *THE BLACK CAT* (1934) as "flawed," Lennig concedes that it's one of Lugosi's more "respectable" films. I'm not at all sure that respectability is uppermost in the minds of fans as a criterion. The idea that some of the less respectable offerings might be fun never seems to crop up.

Nonetheless, it's a well-written, thoroughly researched book that's obviously a labor of love (in the best sense of that overused phrase). It may occasionally provoke the reader, but it will never bore him—and it's an essential work for any Lugosi fan.

—Ken Hanke

THE WAR OF THE WORLDS MURDER

Max Allan Collins

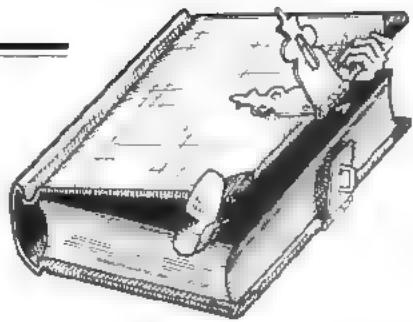
Berkley, 2004

256 pages—\$7.99

Think you're up on the not-so-private lives of celebrities past? Did you know that mystery writer Jacques Futrelle, creator of the nameless sleuth called the Thinking Machine, was investigating murder on the *Titanic* when it sank? Did you know that S. S. Van Dine, creator of the dilettante detective Philo Vance, was investigating a case of espionage when the ship he was on—the *Lusitania*—also sank? Did you know that, during the London blitz in 1942, a 20th-century Jack the Ripper was tracked down by Agatha Christie, creator of Hercule Poirot and Miss Jane Marple?

You probably didn't know a single one of those facts, because they all came from the fertile imagination of Max Allan Collins and made their debut in his popular series of historical mysteries. (Futrelle really *was* on board the *Titanic*, though.) Which means you also didn't know that, on the night of October 30, 1938, when Orson Welles and his *MERCURY THEATER ON THE AIR* was scaring the bejesus out of the populace with an all-too-realistic adaptation of H. G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1898), the murder of one of Welles' many girlfriends was being investigated in the very same CBS Building by Walter Gibson, creator of *The Shadow*!

Fanciful? You bet—and also irresistible. The murder comes late in the ac-



tion, but it's hardly missed, not when Collins is cleverly recreating the busy life of Broadway and radio's (and soon Hollywood's) Boy Wonder, Welles—plus his often exasperated coworkers, including producer John Houseman, composer Bernard Herrmann, writer Howard Koch, and actors Paul Stewart, Dan Seymour, and Judy Holliday. Then there's the mass hysteria brought on by the broadcast, spreading from New York to New Jersey. For these sections of his novel, Collins elaborates on the actual experiences of real people on The Night That Panicked America. Their names probably won't ring any bells, but Collins gives a measure of immortality to the Chapman family, who lived on a farm east of Grovers Mill, New Jersey (the site of the Martian invasion in Koch's script); to student Sheldon Judcroft and professor Arthur Barrington, who took off from Princeton University in search of aliens; and to the Dorn Sisters, Jane and Eleanor, devout Baptists who spent what they thought would be their final moments on earth praying by the radio.

Who murdered the lovely Miss Donovan? The Shadow knows—and so will charmed and delighted readers who spend a few happy hours with *The War of the Worlds Murder*

—Richard Valley

THE MARTIAN WAR

Gabriel Mesta
Pocket Books, 2005
272 pages—\$23.00

An entirely different approach to the invaders from Mars is taken by Gabriel Mesta in *The Martian War: A Thrilling Eyewitness Account of the Recent Alien Invasion as Reported by Mr. H. G. Wells*. The author returns us to the late 19th century and the "true story" of the events that later resulted in Wells' classic novel *The War of the Worlds*. Mesta peoples (and aliens) his captivating adventure with such Wellsian creations as the Invisible Man, Doctors Moreau and Carvor, and the Grand Luna of the Moon.

Along for the ride, in addition to H. G. himself, are such real-life figures as Thomas Henry Huxley, an early defender of Darwinism; and Percival Lowell, creator of the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Arizona and a firm believer in life on Mars.

The Martian Wars makes for a fascinating and fun pastiche of the world of H. G. Wells, one *Scarlet Street* readers should thoroughly enjoy.

—Richard Valley

HOLLYWOOD GOTHIC

David J. Skal
Faber and Faber, Inc., 2004
370 pages—\$18.00

Scarlet Street readers need no introduction to *Hollywood Gothic*. First published in 1990, it is the definitive guide "to the tangled web of *Dracula*, from novel to stage to screen," as the book's subtitle rightly claims. Besides cementing author David J. Skal's reputation as an authority on the long unlifed of the fictional

Transylvanian, the book was responsible for the unearthing and reconstruction of the splendid, simultaneously produced Spanish-language version of the 1931 *DRACULA*. By writing about this other *DRACULA* (he actually went all the way to Cuba just to see it), Skal single-handedly created a demand for it that Universal ultimately realized could be profitably satisfied.

But whither *Hollywood Gothic*, the revised edition? Skal certainly has more to say about the mysterious Mr. Bram Stoker. As might be expected, he also brings us up to date on recent retellings of the saga, from BRAM STOKER'S *DRACULA* (1992) to *DRACULA: PAGES FROM A VIRGIN'S DIARY* (2002).

However, far from providing merely enhanced bookends to the original work, Skal seamlessly weaves in additions and revisions throughout. There is even a correction of the first book's rendering of the Spanish for that notorious comment concerning the fruit of the vine, this time accompanied by a much clearer photo of El Conde attending Señor Renfield at that foolish little hombre's last (conventional) supper.

There were no DVDs in 1990 (think of that!), the year the book was first published. Accordingly, Skal has added information about the DVD releases of the two 1931 *DRACULA* films and the long-aborning sequel, *DRACULA'S DAUGHTER* (1936). Skal may be too modest about his important contributions to these discs; as the foremost living exponent of what our dear Uncle Forry has termed "Draculore," who better to provide a commentary or some on-camera discourse?

Do I have any caveats? Well, this aging theater major bristled at Skal's use of the term "Broadway extras." Films have extras; Broadway shows have chorus or cast members. Actually, the only real problem with the new volume is its trade-paperback size, which (though handy for subway reading) means that many of the rare and excellent illustrations of the first edition have had to be omitted. Skal has scouted up a number of previously unseen illustrations that fit the new format, which is some consolation, but I'll be holding on to both the 1990 and the 2004 editions.

Reading this revised version of a favorite book was like visiting with a well-known old friend: a friend who can, nonetheless, still pull a surprise or two. This new, smaller but longer *Hollywood Gothic* is, indeed, even better than before. To quote that well-known philosopher, Mae West, "Too much of a good thing can be wonderful!"

—Bob Gutowski

A QUAINT AND CURIOUS VOLUME OF FORGOTTEN LORE

Frank J. Dello Stritto
Cult Movies Press, 2003
382 pages—\$29.95

Frank J. Dello Stritto subtles his entry in the ever-burgeoning field of horror film literature "The Mythology & History of Classic Horror Films." Wise in his gen-

eration—the generation that discovered horror during the "monster boom" of the late fifties and early sixties—Dello Stritto realizes that merely relating production trivia about the making of classic fright flicks isn't enough. These films demand an analytical mate, an examination and interpretation of what actually was captured on film. The author writes: "History and mythology are inseparable. Delving into what is on screen means delving into what happened off it." And vice versa. Many historians aren't up to that challenge. Dello Stritto comes through with flying colors. (He writes in his acknowledgments that "Whenever I become too carried away with interpretations of movies' possible hidden meanings, I feel the disapproving stare of Arthur Lennig." Worthy though Mr. Lennig is, my advice is: ignore him. Interpretations never hurt anyone.)

Within this quaint and curious volume, fright fans will find chapters devoted to such familiar subjects as Frankenstein's Monster, Count Dracula, Imhotep, The Wolf Man, and the Phantom of the Opera, but the manner in which they're discussed is anything but familiar. Simply consider a few chapter titles—"The Naked Soul of Man," "The Dread of Something After Death"—and you'll get the idea. And having gotten the idea, get the book. You'll find it challenging and intriguing.

Richard Valley

A FIELD GUIDE TO MONSTERS

Dave Elliott
Hyles Publishing, Inc., 2004
192 pages—\$19.95

Those who like their monsters seasoned with a dash of humor (and what spiritual child of Forrest J Ackerman does not?) will find much to enjoy in Dave Elliott's *A Field Guide to Monsters*. (Within, the book is credited to Elliott, C. J. Henderson, and R. Allen Leider but only Elliott's name is on the cover.) Subtitled "This Book Could Save Your Life," *A Field Guide* is presented much as an Audubon Society guide to birds, but instead of red-throated loons and yellow-bellied sapsuckers, one finds entries for crab monsters, and lagoon creatures. For those who insist on ornithological references, there are pages devoted to Rodan (well, it flies), Mothra (well, it flies), and the hen woman of *FREAKS* (1932).

The book is fun, and the full-color layout is not only attractive, but as amusing as the text. Entries cover Behavior (the Phantom of the Opera "murders anyone whom, in his madness, he suspects of, well, anything"), Lethality (frogs can "make you croak"), Weaknesses (the Bride of Frankenstein has "broken nails, split ends, weak batteries"), and Powers (the Fly can "regurgitate at will").

If you're planning to hop a flight to Transylvania or just want to curl up by the fire while Countess Maria Zaleska roasts her old man, *A Field Guide to Monsters* is a fine late-night companion.

Richard Valley

DARK PASSAGES

Continued from page 52

lists, including the need to take a stand against corruption and intimidation. The film also acknowledges the lure of vigilantism. The Pattersons' weapon of choice may be the ballot and John argues against mob violence, but he also declares that, if the law doesn't find his father's killer he will, "and if the law doesn't take his life . . . I'll do it myself." These criminals are not outsiders, but local people, more or less indistinguishable from everyone else ordinary folk who seem "possessed" by something that reduces their humanity. The resulting network of corruption involves even the police and "men in our state government." Eventually the battered hero makes telephone contact with the outside, uncontaminated world and learns with relief that the city will be placed under martial law. Ultimately, though, we are warned that the evil men are still out there waiting for a chance to regain influence. (Many of these elements reappeared a year later in the script of *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*, which was written by PHENIX CITY's coauthor, Daniel Mainwaring.)

A likely creative influence on *PHENIX CITY* is cowriter Crane Wilbur who also "documented" the film in *Phenix City*. The versatile Wilbur acted in *THE PERILS OF PAULINE* (1914); wrote the play *THE MONSTER* (1922), which became a Lon Chaney film; and scripted *HOUSE OF WAX* (1953) and *THE MAD MAGICIAN* (1954). He both wrote and directed the crime films, *CANON CITY* (1948) and *OUTSIDE THE WALL* (1950). His career deserves closer examination.

By the way, *THE PHENIX CITY STORY* originally started with a reporter (perhaps Crane Wilbur) interviewing some of the people involved in the events. This 13-minute segment was trash in 1957, but may seem old hat to viewers weaned on video journalism. It is often omitted from prints, reducing the running time to 87 minutes.

Paul M. Jensen

SON OF DRACULA (1943)

The most fatal of filmdom's femme fatales is Kay Caldwell (Louise Albritton). Even Phyllis Dietrichson could take lessons from the woman who makes a sap out of the King—or rather, the Prince—of the Vampires. Kay's scheme involves nothing so insipid as cashing in on an insurance policy—but, as in any good *noir*, there's an unforeseen complication to the plan.

SON OF DRACULA melds several genres into one of the more intriguing Universal thrillers of the forties. The film is set in the States. A year earlier, Universal had transplanted Kharis to wild haunted New England in *THE MUMMY'S TOMB* (1942). *SON*'s moss-draped Southern plantation proved just as eerie—and why not? The sets used in each film were mostly the same. *SON*, however, better explores its milieu—though not, admittedly, to the extent that Alfred Hitchcock and Orson Welles would, respectively, in *SHADOW OF A DOUBT* (1943) and *THE STRANGER* (1946). Still, the presence of Frank Craven (fresh from his Broadway turn in *OUR TOWN* (1938)—playing a folksy doctor, signals a clear intent to juxtapose old-world horrors with Americana.

The juxtaposition might work better if someone other than Lon Chaney Jr. took on the role of Count Alucard. Chaney neither possesses nor is able to convey the exotic and alien qualities that would thrust the culture clash into relief. It is not so much a question of a bad performance as the wrong performer; Chaney is excellent in Alucard's cellar confrontation with Doc Brewster (Craven), positively dripping with understated malevolence. If he suggests less Transylvanian royalty than American gangster this very quality helps code *SON* as an early example of *noir*.

Film noir is generally considered a post-WWII phenomenon, but one of the most famous titles, *DOUBLE INDEMNITY* (1943), came smack in the middle of the war years (and a year after *SON*). *Noir*'s visual qualities—the deep, pervasive shadows and off-kilter camera angles—go back to German Expressionist films and were soon after appropriated by the Hollywood horror movies. But *noir* is more than shadows and dutch angles; it is a cynical inversion of Romantic archetypes.

Alucard thinks he has seduced Kay, but she has lured him from Budapest, desirous of being inducted into the ranks of the undead. Following that, she will

dispose of the count and immortalize the man she truly loves, Frank Stanley (Robert Paige)—whether he wishes it or not. Based on its corkscrew intrigues alone, *SON* qualifies as *noir*.

SON doesn't neglect the fantastic; it contains some of the most memorable sequences of Universal's forties titles, not the least a sequence in which Kay clandestinely meets Alucard in the swamp. The vampire's coffin bobs to the surface, and a glowing mist seeps out and resolves itself into Alucard, who rides the casket to shore like a gondola, accompanied by Hans Salter's exulting music. The two then drive off to a justice of the peace and a thunderstorm whips up as the hellish wedding begins.

Harry H. Long

THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY (1999)

In Italy, a young American (Matt Damon) assumes the identity of a wealthy playboy (Jude Law) with whom he's become emotionally obsessed, leading to murder and betrayal on a grand scale.

This elegant, literary thriller, based on the 1955 novel by Patricia Highsmith (the subject of an earlier adaptation, 1960's *PURPLE NOON*, starring Alyn Deon), follows sociopathic anti-hero Tom Ripley (Damon), who cheats, steals, and murders his way to a position of huge good fortune, leaving a trail of devastation in his wake. Set against the backdrop of tourist Italy—encompassing Rome and Venice and all points between—Anthony Minghella's film is a compelling treat from start to finish. Minghella layers detail upon detail as Ripley's friendship with—and secret love for—Dickie Greenleaf (Law) blossoms and sours, leading to an inevitable plot twist that introduces a whole new set of complications for the central characters. As Hitchcock so often did in his films, Minghella renders the audience complicit in Ripley's escalating crime wave.

Damon may seem a little young and unworldly for such a complex character, but he judges the role with great sensitivity, especially in those scenes in which (overtly or otherwise) Tom indicates a strong sexual attraction to Dickie. Tom's love goes unreciprocated—or does it? The characters are driven apart by jealousy, bitterness, and ultimately violence. His fantasies shattered by harsh reality, Tom finds solace in the arms of a mutual acquaintance, Peter Smith-Kingsley (Jack Davenport), the only person capable of taking Dickie's place. Their chance for happiness is snatched away by a cruel trick of fate, however. Terrific, Oscar-caliber support by Gwyneth Paltrow and Philip Seymour Hoffman (as Dickie's fiancée and best friend, respectively) and beautiful, classy production values throughout make *THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY* a first-rate modern *noir*.

—Gary Palmer

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Film Noir on DVD

by Mark Clark

THIEVES' HIGHWAY

The Criterion Collection—\$39.99

Director Jules Dassin stands among the giants of *film noir*, his lofty reputation built on such tougher-than-leather crime dramas as *BRUTE FORCE* (1947), *NAKED CITY* (1948), and, especially, the seminal caper thriller *RIFIFI* (1955). Over the years, while those films have garnered accolades, *THIEVES' HIGHWAY* (1949) has gathered dust, rarely revived and infrequently praised. When The Criterion Collection announced it would release two more Dassin *noir* classics on DVD, *THIEVES' HIGHWAY* generally was considered the "other" movie of the couplet, well behind the better known, more lauded *NIGHT AND THE CITY* (1950).

Despite its relatively lightweight reputation, *THIEVES' HIGHWAY* may be the ultimate Dassin film. It is, at minimum, the best picture the soon-to-be-blacklisted director made in Hollywood. A no-nonsense, deeply cynical yarn brimming with greed-drunk villains, double-crossing dames, and a "hero" who concocts a revenge scheme, only to have it blow up in his face.

Richard Conte stars as Nick Garcos, an ex GI who returns from WWII to discover his truck driver father (Morris Carnovsky) has lost his legs in an "accident" caused by a greedy greengrocer, Mike Figlia (Lee J. Cobb), who refused to pay off on a shipment. To get even with Figlia, Nick hatches a scheme involving a fellow trucker (Mildred Mitchell) and a load of apples. But his plans are undone by Figlia's henchmen and a prostitute in Figlia's sway (Valentina Cortese). Further twists soon follow. The film's climax packs an almost visceral wallop. Dassin's direction is sure-footed and imaginative throughout. At points, its truck scenes achieve *WAGES OF FEAR*-level suspense. The script by A. I. Bezzerides (adapted from his 1950 novel *Thieves' Market*), ratchets up the tension expertly

and sings with memorable dialogue. And the performances, especially by Conte, Cobb, and Cortese, are spot-on. A blatantly moralistic coda, not filmed by Dassin but tacked on at studio insistence, is the only misstep.

Criterion lives up to its own lofty reputation with this superb DVD. Not only did the Collection's brain trust have the vision to rescue this film from obscurity, but they present it in a luminous black-and-white transfer that does full justice to Dassin's striking compositions. The mono sound is clear as a bell. Additionally, Criterion loads the DVD with illuminating bonus features, including an on-camera interview with Dassin, who displays good humor and refreshing candor about the film; an interesting audio commentary by Alain Silver, editor of *The Film Noir Reader*, the original theatrical trailer; and a perceptive booklet essay by critic Michael Sragow, author of *Produced and Abandoned: The Best Films You've Never Seen* (1990).

After this release, hopefully *THIEVES' HIGHWAY* will move onto the list of Best Films Movie Fans Have Seen.

THE BIG CLOCK

Universal Home Video—\$14.99

Over the years, in various books and essays about *film noir*, *THE BIG CLOCK* has been referred to as a "minor masterpiece." Wrong. There's nothing "minor" about it.

THE BIG CLOCK (1948, loosely remade as *NO WAY OUT* in 1987) belongs on the top shelf of the *noir* pantheon, up there with *THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE* (1946), *OUT OF THE PAST* (1947), *DOUBLE INDEMNITY* (1944), and other fabled films. As its title suggests, *THE BIG CLOCK* is tightly wound and moves like a precision instrument, building suspense inexorably until its alarming finale. Ray Milland contributes the finest performance of his career as news magazine editor George Stroud, who—in classic *noir* fashion—commits a relatively minor moral lapse and finds himself trapped in a deadly misunderstanding.

Stroud, pounding martinis after a domestic spat with his wife (Maurice O'Sullivan), chances across Pauline (Rita Johnson), his boss's disgruntled—and equally sloshed—mistress. The pair flirt and retire to Pauline's room, but fail to consummate their potential dalliance. As Stroud leaves, he sees his boss, publisher Earl Janoth (Charles Laughton), arrive. Janoth murders Pauline. The next day, Janoth assigns Stroud to bring all the news magazine's investigative machinery to bear on tracking down Pauline's killer, who is presumed to be "Jefferson Randolph," an impromptu pseudonym Stroud invented for himself the night before. Only Stroud knows that the last person to see Pauline was Janoth and not "Jefferson Randolph"—but how can he prove it? Soon, Janoth begins to suspect that Stroud knows who actually killed Pauline, and a treacherous game of cat-and-mouse ensues. All the while, a giant clock in the publishing company's lobby ticks down the minutes until "Jefferson Randolph" will be revealed as Stroud himself. At points, *THE BIG CLOCK* seems a *noir* riff on *HIGH NOON*.

In addition to Milland's careful, calibrated, multilayered masterpiece of a leading performance, the picture benefits from a scintillating supporting turn by the great Laughton, who is gleefully smarmy here. Also delightfully on hand is Laughton's real-life wife, Elsa Lanchester, as an eccentric artist who holds one of the keys to "Jefferson Randolph's" identity. *THE BIG CLOCK* represents a career zenith for director John Farrow (O'Sullivan's husband; the film was a real family affair), and boasts a splendid script from John Latimer. The production values are superb, as well, especially the imaginative sets created by Sam Comer and Ross Dowd—which are, in turn, expertly lit by cinematographers Daniel Fapp and John Seitz.

Universal's bare-bones DVD offers the film in a sharp transfer from an excellent source print, with good mono sound and only a few speckles and other minor blemishes. Although a fully restored and better-supplemented disc would have been nice, at this price point, no *noir* fan should miss *THE BIG CLOCK*.

LAURA

20th Century Fox Home Video—\$14.99

In 1944, producer/director Otto Preminger unveiled *LAURA*, perhaps the most stylish and sophisticated *noir* films, and also among the most deeply cynical. On the surface, it's the story of tough-minded Detective Mark MacPherson (Dana Andrews) investigating the murder of young socialite Laura Hunt (Gene Tierney).

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VIRGINIA MAYO

Continued from page 55

out one day to Adrian's Salon in Beverly Hills and said, "Now, you girls pick out four outfits each." And so we did! (Laughs) Imagine that! I was very glad to get some clothes, 'cause back in those days I didn't have much money; I would just wear whatever I could afford. I got these beautiful outfits and appreciated it very much.

SS: How did you get the female lead in *WONDER MAN*?

VM: Mr. Goldwyn was always screen-testing me. I tested for *WONDER MAN* and that was my first starring picture with Danny Kaye. Actually, I'd already worked with Danny—this is a secret that not many people know. This was before *Billy Rose and the Diamond Horseshoe*. The act I was with was called in to perform in Baltimore. It was a vaudeville house; they had vaudeville and then a picture. We were called in because our act was simply, always wonderfully good. We always got laughs. Danny was on the bill and he didn't go over too well. I think his act was too sophisticated for Baltimore, for the common folk around the country. He did those crazy kind of routines

that his wife, Sylvia Fine, would write. My act was this horse act. I was the ring mistress of this horse called Pansy. And it was very clever; the act was very clever; that's why we were called to Baltimore to boost the comedy act in the theater.

SS: Did you meet up with Danny Kaye anywhere else before you went to Hollywood?

VM: Oh, sure! When I was at the Diamond Horseshoe, he was on Broadway. I went backstage at his theater, because I was looking for a girl to replace me, and he was there doing his act. I said, "Danny, I'm going to go to Hollywood!" He said, "So am I!" I said, "Well, I'm going to go for Goldwyn," and he said, "So am I!" (Laughs) It was very coincidental. So, anyway, we knew each other and lo and behold we were in the same picture—not that Danny was happy about it. He wanted some established actress to be opposite him. I'm sure he didn't think of having me in his picture, but Sylvia said she saw a test and said, "Oh, that's the girl from Baltimore!"

SS: Sylvia Fine really called all the shots in her marriage to Danny Kaye. Did you get on well with her?

VM: I hardly ever saw her. She would never be on the set. She'd write won-

derful material for Danny. She was a very clever woman, a very wonderful writer. Danny, it seemed to me, was always antagonistic towards me.

SS: In a playful way?

VM: No, in a real way! He kept asking Goldwyn for Ingrid Bergman! (Laughs) Really, it's laughable. Ingrid Bergman couldn't do comedy in the wildest days of her career! Comedy was not her forte! She got Oscars for her acting, she was wonderful, but not for her comedy. Danny wanted a bigger star opposite him because it would make him more prestigious. Mr. Goldwyn wouldn't hear of it and he was the last word—always!

SS: Did Kaye make it hard for you on the set?

VM: No. I could tell he wanted an established actress to work with him, but he didn't show it that he wasn't satisfied with me. I knew how to work comedy. I was working with the horse act all that time on the stage; I knew what it was all about, the timing and all.

SS: What's your personal favorite of the films you made with Danny Kaye?

VM: *THE KID FROM BROOKLYN*. It was the best written. It had a lot of good actors in it, like Lionel Stander and Walter Abel and Eve Arden. I think it was one of the best and fun-

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2. The name of Letitia Blacklock's cottage in A MURDER IS ANNOUNCED is _____.
3. In the 1980s, Geraldine McEwan played E. F. Benson's famous comic character _____ on British television.
4. When Mrs. McGillicuddy travels on the 4:50 FROM PADDINGTON, she looks out the window and witnesses _____?
5. Joanna Lumley plays Dolly Bantry in THE BODY IN THE LIBRARY. In the 1970s, she was John Steed's new partner _____ on THE NEW AVENGERS.



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RIGHT (Top to Bottom): Meek, mild Walter Mitty (Danny Kaye) leads a secret life full of daydreams, all of which feature a gorgeous young woman (Virginia Mayo) whom he later encounters in "real life."

nies. Danny was very good in it—and I delivered, too! It was a cute picture, just my favorite. I like *A SONG IS BORN*, too. That was the last one we did together, Danny and I. It had all these wonderful musicians—Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, Louis Armstrong, Lionel Hampton, Charlie Barnet. It was a story of these professors living in this musical conservatory, writing a book on music and how it developed through the ages. Danny Kaye was one of the professors. I played a showgirl and my boyfriend was played by Steve Cochran. He's involved in some shady doings, and they're after me because I'm associated with this gangster. So I hide out in the conservatory.

*SS: It's actually a remake of *BALL OF FIRE*, which was made only seven years earlier. Both films were directed by Howard Hawks. It must have been wonderful working with all those great musicians.*

VM: Wasn't that wonderful? As a kid I loved Benny Goodman's orchestra and there he was playing a part, playing a professor. I was too shy to ask him for an autograph. I wanted to tell him how much I loved his music and how great it was—and here I didn't even do that! How foolish I was as a kid! He was right there on the set and I couldn't get up enough nerve to say, "Oh, Benny, give me your autograph; I loved you as a kid!" (Laughs) Oh, my, what a dumbbell I was!

*SS: Earlier, you'd finally gotten a chance at a serious role in the postwar drama *THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES*.*

VM: Mr. Goldwyn was again going to produce this picture, and William Wyler was going to direct. Of course, he'd directed for Goldwyn so many times. It was a great script by Robert Sherwood. I got to read it and then I made a test for it.

SS: Was Wyler a tough director?

VM: They said he was! They told me he was always doing 30 takes, and I said, "Okay, I'll have to go through that." Well, I was doing *THE SECRET LIFE OF WALTER MITTY* at the time and I had to jump into *THE BEST YEARS*, because they had finished shooting the rest of the story on *THE BEST YEARS* and now it was my turn. I had to finish *WALTER MITTY* and *THE BEST YEARS* practically simultaneously. Willie Wyler was wonderful to me. I had about five scenes to shoot and Willie Wyler was kind. After the first scene, he said, "Okay, wrap it up! Go to the next scene." He didn't even criticize or say it was good or whatever. He didn't say anything, we'd just move on. I was shocked, I guess. He didn't even find anything wrong with the scenes that I had with Dana Andrews, who was playing my husband. All the scenes were in one little



apartment, so it was easy to move on to the next scene.

SS: Was it difficult not getting any actual direction from Wyler?

VM: Well, he didn't correct anything I did; he just let it go ahead. I'd worked out all my scenes with my coach and thought the scenes were going beautifully—and Willie never said anything opposite. I just went on and did what we had worked out in rehearsal. It turned out that he liked what I had done, evidently, because he never criticized. He never had me do even a third or fourth take. We didn't have to do that; he liked what I did. He was fine and never said anything bad about my performance; it was just printed



just as I did it, what I'd worked out. I had one scene with Teresa Wright, where she's determined to break up my marriage to Dana Andrews. I've been unfaithful during the war. We're in this powder room and I dump my purse, pick up my lipstick, and start fixing myself. I'm being very vulgar for her benefit; she's going to break up my marriage and I don't care 'cause I'm not really in love with my husband. So we did that scene and it worked out fine, and that was my last scene in the picture. It was a great picture. It got so



many Academy Awards. It was so well written and directed; it was wonderful! SS: Did you prefer being a serious actress to doing comedy?

VM: There's not that much difference. Acting is acting; you follow what your character does. I found it wasn't that different at all acting in *THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES*. Everybody else, they were serious actors; I was just not noted for being a serious actor. I was noted for playing comedy, and being costarred with Danny Kaye all the time. I guess it was a surprise to a lot of people that I could do it, but at the party—Mr. Goldwyn had a party in New York at the opening John Huston met me and said, "You ought to get an Academy Award for that!" Well, I was shocked. I couldn't believe that was coming from such a notable man of screen work. Of course, I didn't get an award, but coming from him that was interesting. I'm so glad the picture was so successful, 'cause Goldwyn was so emotional when he took his Oscars. He was crying, 'cause this was his big achievement. The picture did very well. The music by Hugo Friedhofer

was so well done; it didn't get any awards, but it was beautiful music. And everybody was so good. Harold Russell got his award for being the fellow with no hands and he was a natural; he was very good. He played the part just right. He had no hands; they were blown off when he was in a training program before he went into the war. He happened to catch Willie Wyler's eye. He was in a commercial, an Army training thing. Wyler saw that he was as a natural actor and hired him for the picture. He was a very nice person, too; I occasionally talk to him. I enjoyed working in the picture, but I only worked with Dana and in that one single scene with Teresa Wright. I'd worked with Dana before, so it was fine. I enjoyed doing the picture.

SS: Because of the many dream sequences, you got to play a lot of different roles in *THE SECRET LIFE OF WALTER MITTY*. VM: Oh, yeah! (Laughs) I played a southern belle in one scene and Danny Kaye was a riverboat gambler. He comes up to me and gives me back the deed to my father's plantation, 'cause he won it in a card game.

SS: *WALTER MITTY* featured one of the screen's greatest villains—Boris Karloff.

VM: Oh, yes, he was in it—playing a heavy, of course. (Laughs) His usual role! He tries to push Danny Kaye out the window, and then he pretends to be a psychiatrist later in the picture. He says that Danny "needs treatment." It's a shame, but I never really got to talk to him off-camera. I worked with a lot of these famous, wonderful actors, but I just never got a chance to talk to them. I remembered Boris Karloff in *FRANKENSTEIN*, of course. He was wonderful. I felt sorry for the Munster; I thought he was misused, mistreated, and such. When Karloff wasn't playing monsters, he had a face that was well, you couldn't place it as being kindly. His face was his fortune, 'cause he always played heavies.

SS: Film noir became increasingly prevalent in the late forties, and you starred in a popular noir titled *FLAXY MARTIN*.

VM: Oh, gosh. I barely even remember what that was about—beyond the fact that I was playing a tough woman, obviously. (Laughs) *FLAXY MARTIN* is a good title for a picture, that's for sure! Boy, it made some money. The picture was a hit!

SS: It was a Warner Bros. film.

VM: With Zachary Scott. They gave me some leading people that I didn't know very well. I still didn't know them very well after we worked together. I had the good fortune to have a name when I left Goldwyn and went to Warners, so they were glad to have me. I was glad to go to a big studio where I could have more leading men and not just Danny Kaye. I

wanted other actors to work with, and at Goldwyn there wasn't much chance of getting that—except for Steve Cochran. He was in *WONDER MAN*, *THE KID FROM BROOKLYN*, *THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES*, and *A SONG IS BORN*. Then I went to Warner Bros. and who was in *WHITE HEAT*—Steve Cochran! (Laughs)

SS: No getting away from him!

VM: I worked with Steve so much. I really loved him in a way, like a brother. In the sixties, he went out on the ocean with a bunch of people. He had a boat that was not very seaworthy, and he took all these Mexican women out and he was going to give them screen tests. Well, he got out on the ocean with those women and he had an attack of some kind. They didn't know how to get to shore in time to save his life! That's what I heard about Steve. Terrible! Just terrible! I knew he didn't have good health, 'cause he wasn't in the army during the war. But all these people I cared for had difficult lives. I worked with Vera-Ellen twice, in *WONDER MAN* and *THE KID FROM BROOKLYN*. She had a baby and it died of crib death, and it just ruined her life. I tried to call her and the maid said, "She's not talking to anybody." Dena, Danny Kaye's daughter—who I'd only met once when she was a little kid—she called and said, "There's a person who wants to interview you about my father." That was the scandal about Danny being bisexual and having the affair with Laurence Olivier. She said, "Please don't talk about my father to this man." I said, "Sure, it doesn't matter to me. I don't want to hurt Danny." Why should I do that? I cared for him as a nice guy, and I knew too much about Danny and Laurence Olivier.

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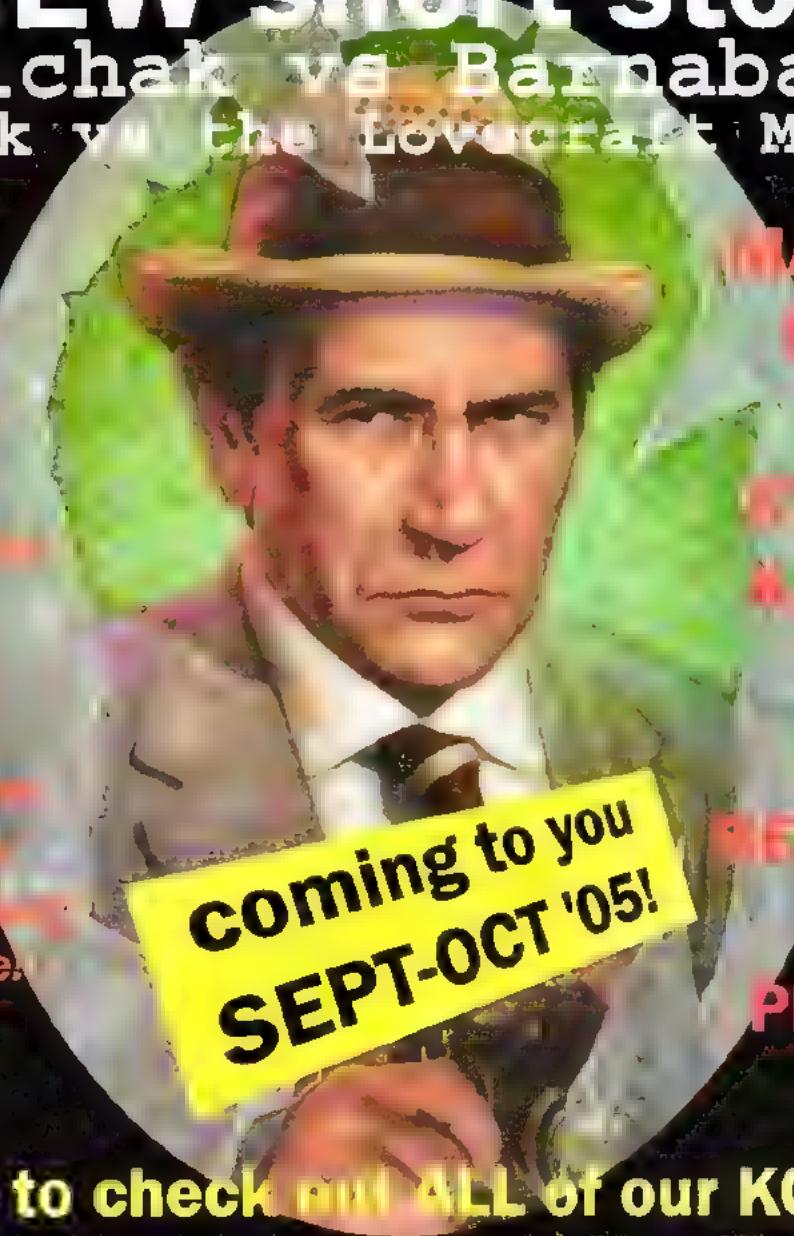
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MONSTROUS MUSICALS

Continued from page 45

its debut on the West End in September 1974. The show's bloody but engaging score was by Ron Pember and Denis De Marne. *Variety* caught JACK THE RIPPER at the time and even gave it a relatively favorable review: "The saga of Jack the Ripper must be stale fare even by Sunday supplement standards. If there was any doubt, this new musical dispels it, though the show has a fine score and is entertainingly played." It was given its American premiere four years later by Providence's Trinity Rep, but nothing has been heard of it since.

Jack was back, at least in America, in THE JACK THE RIPPER REVIEW (1979), at the Manhattan Punchline Off-Broadway, with Saucy Jack being played by a woman! The "Dark Musical in Two Acts" (as it was billed) featured a score by Peter Mattaliano, who also directed the spoof for his Ripper Productions, and Stephen Jankowski.

About 15 years later came JACK'S HOLIDAY, which premiered in New York at Playwright's Horizon in March 1995. A musical in two acts by Randy Courts and Mark St. Germain, it was directed by Susan H. Schulman and starred Allen Fitzpatrick in the lead—singing such would-be standards as "Tricks of the Trade" and "You Never Know Who's Behind You."

A couple of years later, CentaStage in Boston premiered JACK THE RIPPER: THE WHITECHAPEL MUSICAL (1997). It featured a score by Stephen Bergman (music) and Christopher Michael DiGrazia (book and lyrics), and played for a month before vanishing, like the original Saucy Jack, into the London-like mist.

All of this, of course, took place when Jack wasn't sparring fictionally (and nonmusically) with Sherlock Holmes on the stage in Brian Clemens' HOLMES AND THE RIPPER, which played the British provinces during 1988, or before that on the screen in A STUDY IN TERROR (1965) and MURDER BY DECREE (1979).

The musicalizing for the stage of Robert Louis Stevenson's good-versus-evil novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1887), not long after the work's centenary, premiered in spring 1990 at the George Street Playhouse in New Brunswick, New Jersey; with John Cullum playing and singing both roles in a production, called JEKYLL AND HYDE, written by Leonora Thuna (book), Norman Sachs (music) and Mel Stevenson (lyrics).

Much more successful, but with a really tortured history, was the Frank Wildhorn/Leslie Bricusse musical adaptation, premiering at Houston's Alley Theatre in May 1990. Directed by Gregory Boyd, it starred Chuck Wagner and Linda Eder (Mrs. Frank Wildhorn). While it earlier workshoped, an album of the song highlights was recorded with Colm Wilkinson and Eder. The Alley Theatre production apparently was found wanting and the producers went back to the proverbial drawing board. The revised show repremiered in Dallas five years later, still under the same director. Robert Cuccioli now had the lead(s) opposite both Eder (as Lucy Harris) and Christiane Noll (as Emma Carew).

Following was a lengthy shakedown tour that trekked around the country for nearly a year, together with another full cast album. The show ultimately made it to Broadway, opening at the Plymouth Theatre in April 1997, only to be found to be too big, too unwieldy, and too expensive. The decision was made to close it temporarily and reconceive it in a scaled-down version with a new cast, a new director, and a somewhat altered score. Out was Cuccioli; in was soap star Jack Wagner (followed later by rock star Sebastian Bach and TV heartthrob David Hasselhoff); out was director Boyd, and in was Robin Phillips. All told, the Broadway production of JEKYLL & HYDE: THE MUSICAL racked up a respectable 1,543 performances before leaving town at the beginning of 2001, and going on tour with Chuck Wagner back in the lead, 11 years after originating the role in Houston.

Nearly simultaneously with the second premiere in Dallas of the Wildhorn/Bricusse musical, there opened another view of the same tale by David Levy and Leslie Eberhardt (book and lyrics) and Phil Hall (music). This DR. JEKYLL & MR. HYDE saw the dark of night in Miami in August 1995, then did what once was known as the strawhat circuit in 1996 and 1997, and had a 1998 staging at New Jersey's Paper Mill Playhouse. (The roles of Jekyll and Hyde now were split between Richard White and Marc Kudisch.) This staging, like the "other" version of THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA, was contractually required to advertise itself as "Not the Broadway production." The Paper Mill production actually received better notices than the more elaborate Broadway one.

Yet another JEKYLL AND HYDE musical was staged Off Broadway in the summer of 1990 by Theatreworks/USA, with a score by David Crane and Marta Kauffman.



(book and lyrics) and Michael Skloff (music). This one is notable as a quirky contemporized version of the tale aimed at young audiences and dealing with the perils of drugs. Seems a teenage chemistry whiz has developed a strange potion and has become the coolest kid in school. It was also notable for having as its young leading lady, Amanda Green, daughter of actress Phyllis Newman and composer Adolph Green.

Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) has gone through a variety of musicalizations and even an opera through the years. In spring 1990, the curtain went up on a production called *DORIAN* at the Saval Theatre in Greenwich Village. The two-act musical with an ambitious score (24 songs) by Nan Barcan and Michael Rubell had William Broderick in the rather depraved lead. The proverbial picture in the attic continued aging, but the actors didn't they weren't around long enough. The show, presented by the American Ensemble Company, played for just two weeks.

Another version of the Oscar Wilde tale, the almost operatic *DORIAN GRAY* also played Off-Broadway at around the same time. The score was by Joseph Bravaco (book and lyrics) and Robert Cioffi (music), and Doug Welty had the starring role. There was very little spoken dialogue and the plot was considerably expanded from the novel.

A decade later, another *DORIAN* was staged by the Goodspeed Opera House in Connecticut, with a score by Richard Greaves. That run, too, was brief.

More recently, in 2002, a new – and very ambitious –*DORIAN* premiered at the Buell Theatre in Denver. Conceived, directed, and choreographed by James L. Mellon, it had a book by Mellon and Duane Poole, and music and lyrics by Mellon and Scott De Turk. Matt Cavenaugh starred, together with Robert Cuccioli as Lord Henry, here billed as Henry Lord.

An opera, *THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY*, by Lowell Lieberman, was first staged at the Opera de Monte Carlo in May 1996, and three years later, was given its American premiere in Milwaukee. Dorian Gray was sung in the US production by Jeffrey Lentz, Lord Henry Wotton by John Hancock, and Sibyl Vane by Korliss Leker.

The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1831), musicalized affably for the Disney animated feature of 1996, was somewhat quietly adapted to the stage by Walt Disney

Theatricals and premiered in Berlin in 1999 in both German and English. James Lapine directed the show, which he adapted from Hugo's novel, and used the film score by Alan Menken and Stephen Schwartz. It played in Germany for more than two years. Why it still has not been scheduled for a transfer to Broadway remains a question.

Other musical HUNCHBACKS: The Tennessee Rep's in Nashville in 1997, with book, music, and lyrics by Dennis De Young (of the rock band Styx); and the post-modern pop/rock French arena musical, *NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS*, by Richard Cocciante and Luc Plamondon – an eye-filling curiosity that has become the darling of Paris and other French locales since premiering in 1998, has become a West End hit in the UK (where it opened in 2000), and has even played Las Vegas (in English) to overflow audiences. In 2003, Canada's popular Stratford Festival staged yet another original HUNCHBACK musical, featuring a score by Rick Whelan and Gregg Coffin.

A ballet of *THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME* was danced at the Northern Ballet Theatre in Leeds, UK, where it premiered in February 1998, with a score by Philip Feeney. In 1999, it was performed at the Atlanta Ballet, with Mariusz Ostrowski as a dancing Quasimodo.

The Woman in White (1860), Wilkie Collins' Victorian thriller (first serialized beginning in November 1859 in *All the Year Round*, a magazine edited by Collins' close friend Charles Dickens) was musicalized on the London stage during the summer of 2004 by Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber and lyricist David Zippel. It failed to enchant the critics, who were being prepared by the Really Useful people to expect the second coming of Webber's *PHANTOM*. Webber's original Phantom, Michael Crawford, was recruited to put on globs of makeup and tons of padding to mask his onetime matinee idol looks to somewhat comically channel Sydney Greenstreet for the role of Count Fosco, whom Greenstreet played in the 1948 Warner Bros. film version. On the musical's West End opening, *The New York Times'* Ben Brantley pointed, not especially maliciously, to Crawford "in a fat suit and with a Chico Marx accent." Even the corps of British reviewers agreed that the show was a terrible disappointment, although it turns out to be an audience crowd-pleaser and is looking for a healthy London run.

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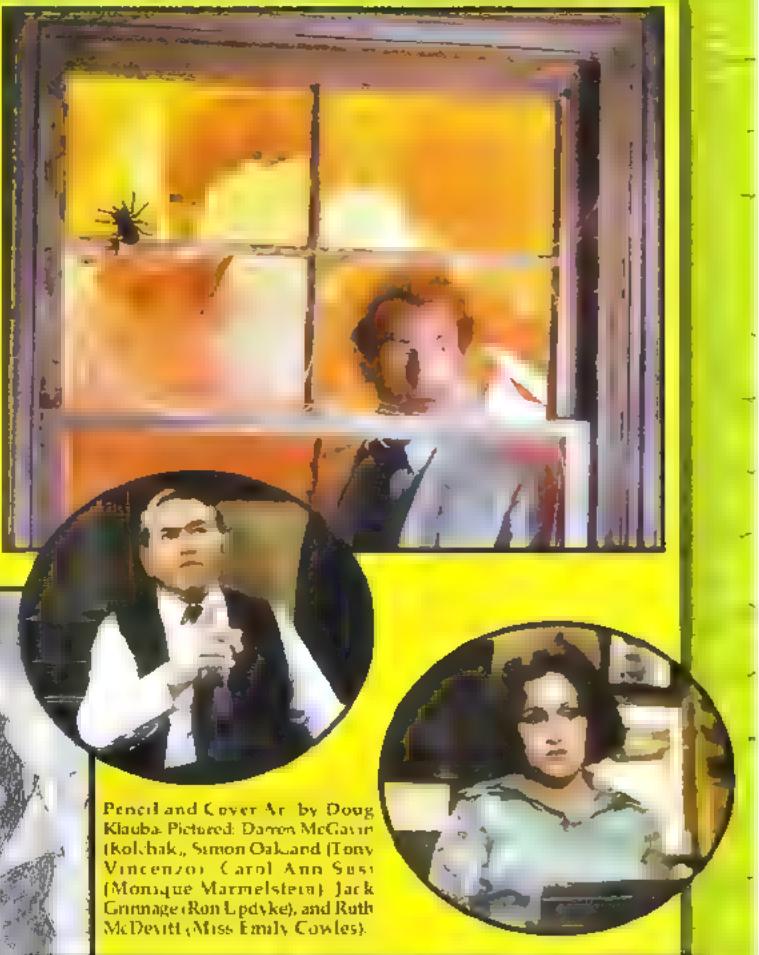
Kolchak's

by Drew Sullivan Booked Again!

You can't keep a good reporter down! Carl Kolchak was created by Jeff Rice back in the early seventies, in his novel *The Kolchak Papers* (published in 1973). Made flesh by actor Darren McGavin, Rice's creation—a throwback to the FRONT PAGE reporters of an earlier era—went on to appear in the telefilms THE NIGHT STALKER (1972) and THE NIGHT STRANGLER (1973). A TV series followed in 1974, followed by a late-night ratings triumph with reruns in the eighties, a new novel (1994's *Grave Secrets*, by Mark Dawidziak) and a successful comic book from Moonstone.

Now comes another Kolchak first—a short story anthology titled *Kolchak: The Night Stalker Chronicles*, with all-new adventures by what Moonstone describes as the finest writers in horror and mystery fiction, TV and films, and comics!" The lineup includes Mike W. Barr (*Batman: Son of the Demon*), James Bates, Elaine Bergstrom (*Blood to Blood*, *The Dracula Story Continues*), Max Allan Collins (*Road to Perdition*), Peter David (*Knight Life*), Mark Dawidziak (*The Night Stalker Companion*), Chuck Dixon (*Superman/Tarzan: Sons of the Jungle*), P. N. Elrod (*The Vampire Files*), Joe Gentile (*Kolchak Sherlock Holmes*), Ed Gorman (*Night Kills*), Steven Grant (*The Punisher*), C. J. Henderson (*Kolchak: Pain Without Tears*), Stuart Kaminsky (*The Toby Peters mysteries*), Brett Matthews (*Spider-Man*), Dave Ulanski (*Mr. Nightmare*), Fred Van Lente (*Amazing Fantasy*), and Robert Weinberg (*The Science of Supervillains*).

Joining this illustrious crew is Scarlet Street's own publisher/editor, Richard Valley, whose contribution, "Shadows From the Screen," will mark his short story debut.



Pencil and Cover Art by Doug Klauba. Pictured: Darren McGavin (Kolchak), Simon Oakland (Tony Vincenzo), Carol Ann Susi (Monique Marmelstein), Jack Grinnage (Ron Lipdyke), and Ruth McDevitt (Miss Emily Cowles).



FEMALE ON THE BEACH

Continued from page 51

circumstances of her tenant's departure. The cop is also a bit taken with the glamourous widow, overplaying his hand by mentioning her previous history with the late Ben Markham (a gambler) and speculating that "she couldn't compete with the dice." The cop also spouts one of the film's most notorious howlers by saying Lynn was "a Vegas specialty dancer" before marriage! The concept of the middle-aged Crawford lap dancing her way through Sin City is mind-boggling!

The introduction of Drummond Hall is a set piece in itself. As Lynn spends the first night in her dream house, she's awakened by the noise of a boat engine. On closer inspection she is confronted with "Drummy," the tanned and muscled Silver Fox of Newport Beach. Some time later, Drummy shows up again in her kitchen. He prepares breakfast and asks Lynn how she likes her coffee. Her reply: "Alone!"

Next we meet—in the flesh—Drummond's ersatz aunt and uncle, Queenie and Osbert, played to the hilt by Kellaway and Schafer. As they repose in the sun, Queenie reminds Drummy to not shade his face, remarking "We have a lot invested in that tan." They're annoyed that the late Mrs. Crandall died before they could make any money off her.

Jeff Chandler is ideal as the reluctant stud for hire, disgusted with the lifestyle forced on him by his association with Queenie and Osbert. Drummy longs for a real job as part owner of a fishing boat business. However, the script calls for Drummy to zero in on Lynn and her money and zero in he does. As Lynn relaxes on her pier in white shorts and Lolita shades, Drummy swims over and renews his seduction, this time trying in vain to put suntan lotion on the famous Crawford gams. "You must come with the house like the plumbing" she tells him. Later, when he discovers Lynn reading a racy

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Lovey Meets the Queen Bee Natalie Schafer

interviewed by
David Del Valle



David Del Valle was very fortunate to know the late Natalie Schafer and interviewed her in her North Rodeo Drive residence on the subject of *FEMALE ON THE BEACH* (1955). This conversation was recorded at Schafer's home in Beverly Hills in 1985...

Scarlet Street: What are your recollections of working with Joan Crawford in FEMALE ON THE BEACH?

Natalie Schafer: Well, Joan was very friendly to me as we started the film. Our dressing rooms were right next to each other. Now, mind you, hers was the size of a Beverly Hills bungalow! It was simply enormous and divine. I remember her being upset with me one afternoon when I arrived on the set in curlers. She said, "Natalie, you must never be seen in public unless you're looking your best! The public expects it of us!"

SS: Did you take her advice?

NS: I understood her point if you were a movie queen like her, but the rest of us put on our makeup just like

everyone else, more or less. I can't worry about my image 24 hours a day—but Joan did!

SS: Did you socialize?

NS: I would have if it hadn't been for one very unfortunate incident about a week into the shoot. Joan asked me to have dinner with her one night after we were done. It happened to be a night I had made other plans that simply could not be changed. I explained this to Joan and asked for a rain check. I said tomorrow night would be better. Joan smiled and said, "Oh, Natalie, don't give it a thought, dear." The very next day I arrived on the set and looked for my trailer and discovered it had been moved clear across the lot—as far from Joan's dressing palace as possible! I was stunned! Could she be so petty? You bet she could, and from that day on Joan Crawford never invited me to anything and remained professional but aloof. She didn't give second chances to anyone.

SS: What a putdown!

NS: Joan was a character, to be sure. But she knew how to be a star and that was all that mattered to her. She gave notes to the director each day we shot and made sure she was lit in just such a way. The whole production was a tribute to her and her image. Jeff Chandler was in awe of her. On more than one occasion he remained behind after we were done to be with Joan. She was very attracted to him and he was gorgeous. The rumor was that Joan always slept with her leading men—and sometimes the ladies as well!

SS: Quel scandale!

NS: Cecil Kellaway and I had a lot of fun making that film. The script was very witty and I enjoyed playing this witch a lot.

SS: Queenie has a bit of GILLIGAN'S ISLAND's Mrs. Howell in her, don't you think?

NS: My dear, there's a little Mrs. Howell in all of us!

FEMALE ON THE BEACH

Continued from page 74

poem about standing naked in the sun, she lets him have it with one of the film's best zingers: "You have all the charm of a suction pump!" Mrs. Markham isn't buying any, but Drummy's phony relatives are running out of time and money and push him into more aggressive action with the hard-nosed widow.

At this point the script for *FEMALE ON THE BEACH* becomes erratic, to say the least. As Lynn's attitude softens toward Drummy, primarily from the tedium of living the lonely existence of a rich widow, she stumbles upon the diary of the late Eloise Crandall—and the film takes off on a brief LAURAesque tangent. Judith Evelyn returns in flashback form as we witness the last days and nights of Eloise Crandall and her hopeless pursuit of Drummond Hall. The mystery of how Mrs. Crandall fell to her death is left unsolved, but the diary destroys any chance of Queenie and Osbert fleecing the savvy Mrs. Markham. Drummy, meanwhile, has really fallen for the glamorous widow and reforms on the spot. (This is typical of the Crawford canon in this period. No man can resist her charms. In the case of *FEMALE*, even a gigolo surrenders in the afterglow of Crawford's key light.)

As Lynn Markham—in spite of all she knows about his past—plans to marry Drummond Hall, the specter of murder shadows the proceedings . . .

FEMALE ON THE BEACH is one of Joan Crawford's most amusing efforts during this period. That one man after another falls for Joan's mantrap of a widow stretches the required suspension of disbelief to its limits. The one liners are unforgettable. Before the wedding, a very intoxicated Amy Rawlinson bursts into Lynn's bedroom to congratulate the bride, only to be told that, if she wants a man like Drummy, "you better save your pennies and then maybe you can have one."

Crawford has a wonderful drunk scene as Lynn waits like her predecessor, Mrs. Crandall, for a call from the "God of the Senses." If *MOMMY DEAREST* (1980) made you curious about the "real" Crawford, then a screening of *FEMALE* is a must. Faye Dunaway used it as a textbook on Crawford mannerisms and Kabuki-like makeup.

As Lynn glides through her spacious Newport Beach house drunk or sober, the recurring love theme by Heinz Roemheld and Herman Stein is milked for all it's worth, unintentionally providing another link to fifties horror—Roemheld and Stein also scored such Universal-International shockers as *THE THING THAT COULDN'T DIE* (1958) and *MONSTER ON THE CAMPUS* (1958). Roemheld is also responsible for the jazzy rendition of "Ruby" used to such advantage by Fellini in the "Toby Dammit" sequence *SPIRITS OF THE DEAD* (1968).

MONSTROUS MUSICALS

Continued from page 71

Nearly four decades after the famed Bette Davis/Jeanne Moreau movie, the decision was made to turn *WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE?* (1962) into a stage musical. A workshop production premiered in 1998 at the Theatre Royal in Brighton, England. The critic for London's *Daily Telegraph* found that "There is certainly real talent on display here. The book is by Henry Farrell, who wrote the novel on which Robert Aldrich based the movie, and the dialogue crackles malevolently. Lee Pockriss has come up with a tuneful score and Hal Hackady lyrics have moments of wit." And one of the local British critics, in West Sussex, wrote: "You couldn't wish for a finer stage monstrosity than Millicent Martin who makes the show her own."

BABY JANE was scheduled to have its world premiere in Houston in 2001 with Millicent Martin (the popular British musical comedy star of many decades ago,



Lynn Markham (Joan Crawford) falls under the hirsute spell of Drummond Hall (Jeff Chandler) in *FEMALE ON THE BEACH* (1955). And why not—her eyebrows match his chest.

This writer has always loved *FEMALE ON THE BEACH* and often wondered why. The reasons are never simple when you're very young, but as one grows older the symbols become clear. *FEMALE* is filled with anxiety and fears that speak silently to impressionable youth. One is intimidated by the power of such icons of the screen as Joan Crawford—and yet their vulnerability filters through the camp to move one to admiration for their talent and personalities.

*This article is excerpted from the forthcoming Fab Press book Female Women—Women with Issues, by Manoah Bowman and David Del Valle. The article is dedicated to the late Christopher S. Districh, David's longtime companion, who loved *FEMALE ON THE BEACH*.*

best known to today's TV audiences as Daphne Moon's daffy mum on *FRAISIER*), but it was postponed for extensive rewrites. It finally opened in 2002, when the *Houston Chronicle* found it "neither an embarrassment nor a catastrophe. Rather this is an honorable, imperfect try at a serious adaptation of that famed saga of rival sisters, both former stars. Chief among its show's strength are its stars—Millicent Martin and Leslie Denniston, stage pros who bring credibility to incredible characters."

What ever has since happened to Baby Jane is another question. Following its two-week premiere run at Theatrical Under the Stars, it was scheduled to embark on a tour on the way to Broadway—but it hasn't been heard from since.

Thus far, awaiting a musicalization that very well could happen one day are such favorite fiends as *The Wolf Man* and *The Mummy*. And *The Invisible Man*—though, with this one, the lead could actually phone in his part!



Angel or devil? Marie Windsor (pictured with Charles McGraw) played one of film noir's slinkiest femmes fatale in **THE NARROW MARGIN** (1952).

DARK PASSAGES

Continued from page 64

THE PARADINE CASE (1947)

Though only obliquely related to *film noir*, Alfred Hitchcock's courtroom drama exploits *noir* conventions—a man's involvement with a Fatal Woman, for example—to underline its ironies. The fact that the man is a married barrister, Anthony Keane (Gregory Peck), and the woman is the beautiful Maddalena Paradine (Alida Valli), whom he defends at London's Old Bailey against a charge of murdering her husband, a war hero, sets the film apart. No underworld gangs or private eyes here. One imagines that both Hitchcock and producer David O Selznick ("In a Tradition of Quality") wanted it exactly that way. On the other hand, *noir* elements of a psychological kind abound in Selznick's screenplay, based on a treatment by Hitchcock's wife, Alma Reville. Of the dead man's blindness, Mrs. Paradine says that he dwelt in "the eternal dark." Nor does the infatuated Keane see the truth about his client. "I feel in the dark" is how he presciently describes his attempts to get at the facts of the case, thus anticipating another deluded Hitchcock male, "Scottie" Ferguson (James Stewart) in *VERTIGO* (1958).

Indeed, if *THE PARADINE CASE* had lived up to the latent qualities of its screenplay, it might have been a masterpiece. Derived from an absorbing (if "old fashioned") 1933 novel by Robert Hichens, at one time an associate of Oscar Wilde, the film pays at least lip service to both the misogyny and the ultimate forbearance of its source. "Doesn't life punish us enough?" pleads the wife (Ethel Barrymore) of sadistic judge Lord Horfield (Charles Laughton) near the end of the film. In turn, her question raises the transcendental notion of "eternal justice" posited by "the great Schopenhauer" (as he's called in the

novel), a philosopher noted for his pessimism. Such a notion, which palpably informs the end of *VERTIGO*, should have made for a rich *noir* experience. But *THE PARADINE CASE* seems lackluster. What went wrong?

Apparently Selznick lost his nerve. Beset by matters of censorship and budget, he was forever rewriting lines at the last minute—driving everyone to distraction. Later, he trimmed over 40 minutes of footage from Hitchcock's rough cut—which admittedly ran nearly three hours. (Note: the film was further reduced for television.) Reports by critic Bill Krohn suggest that this trimming was less than sensitive. Even so, few Hitchcock films attest so directly to its director's belief that "everything's perverted in a different way." The manner in which Keane almost vindictively sets out to nail the manservant Latour (Louis Jourdan), whom he knows to be gay, echoes *MURDER!* (1930) in which lordly Sir John (Herbert Marshall) hunts down the transvestite Handel Fane (Esme Percy), who killed a woman threatening to "out" him. Horfield's sadism finds a parallel in the late Colonel Paradine's fits of temper directed at his wife. By the same token, the worldly Mrs. Paradine's fiercely passionate nature is exactly the inverse of Gay Keane's quiet temperament—Gay (Ann Todd) has led a protected life, but proves wonderfully loyal when Keane most needs her. Of Keane's cruel streak—and that of the judge and the colonel—the novel notes that it may be found in "the best of us."

Lackluster though the film may be, it's underrated. Its depths are suggested by this ambiguous exchange in the courtroom. Keane (to Mrs. Paradine): "Did [Latour] try to make love to you?" Mrs. Paradine: "Yes." The barrister wins his point, yet the fact is that Mrs. Paradine's seduction of the celibate Latour may have been motivated by an element of compassion—the same compassion that led her to marry the blinded colonel in the first place. If the consequences of her act are catastrophic, leading to three people's deaths, the film's implicit question is again that of the pessimist Schopenhauer: isn't the world's "will" itself blind? Accordingly, was Mrs. Paradine its guilty instrument or one more hapless victim?

Ken Mogg

EL DORADO (1967)

Today, Howard Hawks' *EL DORADO*, one of Hollywood's last traditional Westerns, is considered a minor classic, but upon its release in 1967 most people saw it as just another John Wayne Western, if not a blatant rehash of Hawks' *RIO BRAVO* (1959). But this leisurely paced story of a battle over water rights between a homesteading family and a crooked landowner can also be viewed as an example of the cinema's smallest sub genre: Western *Noir*. In fact, at times *EL DORADO* plays very much like an unofficial remake of Hawks' *THE BIG SLEEP* (1946).

The labyrinthine plot (scripted by *BIG SLEEP*'s cowriter Leigh Brackett) begins when professional shootist Cole Thornton (Wayne, in an unusually witty performance) has been hired by Bart Jason (Ed Asner) to help him fend off the MacDonald family of settlers. Old friend J. P. Harrah (Robert Mitchum), now sheriff of El Dorado, sets Thornton straight—Jason is trying to run the hardworking clan off their land in order to take their water. Thornton rides out to Jason to refuse the job.

On the way back, Thornton crosses MacDonald land and is fired on by the youngest MacDonald son (Johnny Crawford). Thornton fires back and seriously wounds the boy, who, believing he's a goner, kills himself. When the guilt-stricken Thornton returns the boy's body to his father, he is shot by Joey (Michelle Carey), MacDonald's wild, tomboyish daughter. The bullet lodges in Thornton's back and causes him periodic episodes of paralysis—usually at the worst possible times.

Struggling with his affliction, Thornton later acquires a sidekick, Mississippi (James Caan), and encounters Nelse McCloud (Christopher George), the gunslinger who took Thornton's place as Jason's hired gun. McCloud tells Thornton that Harrah is now a hopeless drunk and laughing stock. Thornton realizes that Harrah and the MacDonalds are sitting ducks for Jason's men and sets out to help them.

And that's it for actual story—from this point, *EL DORADO* becomes a nocturnal, shadowy standoff between a drunken lawman and a paralytic gunslinger, and a band of ruthless outlaws, which plays out like a deadly game of chess.

Director Hawks is renowned for such signature shtick as overlapping dialogue, but he also habitually—if not flagrantly—reused material. Squint and Cole Thornton becomes Philip Marlowe with spurs, a tough hired gun who is still principled enough to work on his own to defeat the bad guys. Harrah stands in for Bernie Ohls, Marlowe's policeman pal; Jason is crime boss Eddie Mars, McCloud is gunman Cannon, and henchmen Milt and Pedro are *BIG SLEEP*'s Sidney and Pete with dirty vests. Even the "You wanna go out the door first?" gag from the earlier film is reprised here. The only thing missing is Lauren Bacall's Vivian Sternwood though Joey MacDonald, who is alternately sexy-cool and crazy-wild, plays like a combination of both Sternwood sisters in *THE BIG SLEEP*.

But even without a femme fatale, *EL DORADO* proves that a Stetson and serape can be just as effective as a fedora and trench coat in the realm of *film noir*.

Michael Mallory

BLADE RUNNER (1982, 1992)

Harrison Ford stars as jaded ex-cop Rick Deckard in this first-rate, dark sci-fi, directed by Ridley Scott and set

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FILM NOIR ON DVD

Continued from page 65

and—strangely, morbidly—falling in love with the dead woman. But this is really the story of caustic newspaper columnist Waldo Lydecker (Clifton Webb), whose jaundiced outlook on the world and biting dark humor brings to the film the same kind of sardonic edge George Sanders brought to *ALL ABOUT EVE* (1950) and Burt Lancaster provided *THE SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS* (1957).

LAURA has been criticized—not without some justice—for its inefficiencies as a mystery, but such nit-picking is entirely beside the point. This is a movie bursting with intriguing characters, from the morose, lovesick protagonist; to the dead woman's sycophantic fiancé (Vincent Price); to Laura herself. *LAURA* brims with superb performances, and displays all the delights of set and costume design, of cinematography and editing—in essence, all the spit and polish of the Hollywood movie machine working at its well-oiled best. This, plus the wickedly amusing tone that Webb brings to the film, make *LAURA* more than the sum of its parts, and a picture not to be missed.

This was the title, appropriately enough, that Fox used to launch its new Fox Noir DVD line. To say the least, the studio got off on the right foot. The film is offered in a newly

restored transfer, with crisp detail, rich gray scale, firm blacks, and distinct mono sound with surprisingly rich bottom end. Plus, they've loaded this disc with bonus materials: Two audio commentaries, two A&E BIOGRAPHY episodes (on Tierney and Price), a deleted scene, a restoration comparison, a MOVIETONE NEWS clip, a still gallery, and the original theatrical trailer, all for a measly \$14.99.

This kind of quality presentation, those sort of bonus features, and that low a price point would leave even Waldo Lydecker with nothing to bitch about.

PANIC IN THE STREETS

20th Century Fox Home Video—\$14.99
Elia Kazan's best films—*A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE* (1951), *ON THE WATERFRONT* (1954), and *EAST OF EDEN* (1955)—boil with emotional intensity. *PANIC IN THE STREETS* (1951), perhaps the director's most underrated effort, is no exception.

The scenario is nail-biting: A Navy medical officer has just 48 hours to prevent a bubonic plague outbreak in New Orleans. The film's fine cast and Oscar-winning script ring every drop of suspense from his tense premise, as the story builds to a fever pitch.

Richard Widmark enjoys one of his best roles as Clinton Reed, the tough-minded medical officer, who must overcome the skepticism of Tom Warren (Paul Douglas), the local police

captain. Barbara Bel Geddes has a meaty supporting role as Reed's understanding wife. Zero Mostel and Jack Palance play the plague-infected petty hoods sought by Reed and Warren.

Kazan filmed the picture entirely on location and, taking a page from the book of the Italian neorealist filmmakers, fleshed out the supporting cast with local nonprofessionals who simply looked right for their roles. He also shot the film in the documentary-like style of Rossellini and DeSica.

Fox released *PANIC IN THE STREETS* as Volume Three of its Fox Noir line, along with *LAURA* (1944, reviewed above) and *CALL NORTHSIDE 777* (1948, covered in this issue's *DARK PASSAGES: THE WORLD OF FILM NOIR*). Although its status as *noir* is somewhat dubious—it's a straightforward thriller, with few of the hallmark devices commonly associated with *noir*—this remains a terrific film.

Fox's presentation is first-rate. *PANIC* is transferred flawlessly from a clean (albeit unrestored) source print. A few speckles aside, the picture quality is unassailable. The mono sound is clear, if a bit thin. Supplements include an excellent audio commentary from critics James Ursini and Alain Silver, as well as the original theatrical trailer.

DARK PASSAGES

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in the dystopian Los Angeles of 2019 Hampton Fancher and David Peoples based their screenplay loosely on Philip K. Dick's 1968 novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Environmental decay mirrors the moral decay of humanity, that has turned Mother Earth into a filthy old whore. Many of the elite have fled to the Off-World colonies, where humanoid replicants entertain and do the dirty work. If these android slaves escape to Earth and try to pass for human, blade runners (bounty hunters) catch them and "retire" them for good.

BLADE RUNNER questions the definition of a human being. Replicant "skin jobs," engineered for special but limited talents, live for only four years, yet the latest models (NEXLS-6) have learned to feel, think, and understand. The Tyrell Corporation brings Deckard out of retirement to snuff four rebel replicants: Leon (Brion James), Zhora (Joanna Cassidy), the shockingly acrobatic "pleasure model" Pris (Daryl Hannah), and their leader, "combat model" Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer, perfect as this noble villain, the existential man driven to violence). Batty brings his fellow replicants to Earth to confront their creator, Dr. Eldon Tyrell (Joe Turkel), corporate greedhead and mad scientist. They want to know why he inflicted this cruel fate on them.

Monsters that society treats monstrously, the replicants hope to blend with the noisy crowds of megalopolitan L. A., where tranquil refuge exists only for the rich minority in new, 400-foot skyscrapers, crammed between and on top of the ruins of old ones. Most people live in an insane squalor, a Technicolor explosion of urban blight that's a cross between a red light district, a vast video arcade, a carnival, and a toxic waste dump, slick with acid rain. Nonstop blinking, scrolling, blaring advertisements light the darkness. Reinforcing a similarity, Batty confronts Tyrell in the same building, the Bradbury, where Frank Bigelow challenged his poisoner in *D. O. A.* (1950). Meanwhile, Deckard falls for Rachael (Sean Young), a Tyrell employee who dresses and acts like a *film noir* femme fatale. Eventually, he must tell her that she's a replicant, too.

After a largely negative reaction from the preview audience, Warner Bros. insisted that Scott shorten *BLADE RUNNER*, reduce the violence, add narration for Deckard (Roland Kibbee, uncredited, wrote the voiceover), and tack on a more optimistic ending. The movie opened to mixed reviews and disappointing box-office receipts. Movie audiences weren't ready for cyberpunk. Still, a cult following developed around *BLADE RUNNER* and its real and rumored variant versions. A Eu-

ropean release, used for video versions before 1993, included, among other differences, more graphic violence than the U. S. theatrical release. Scott's

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Yes, it can shoot, Cop of the Future, but can it core a apple? Harrison Ford stars in BLADE RUNNER (1982). PAGE 78: John Wayne and Robert Mitchum in EL DORADO (1967).





DARK PASSAGES

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1992 director's cut omits the narration, re edits some scenes, shortens and restores the ending, and suggests more bluntly that Deckard is also a replicant.

BLADE RUNNER won a Hugo for Best Dramatic Presentation. Oscar nominations went to Linda DeScenna, Lawrence G. Paull, and David L. Snyder (Best Art Direction, Set Decoration) and to David Dryer, Douglas Trumbull, and Ricard Yuricich (Best Effects, Visual Effects). Cinematographer Jordan Cronenweth, costumers Michael Kaplan and Charles Knode, and production designer Paull got BAFTAs (British Academy Awards), while 10 other crew members received BAFTA nominations, including Vangelis, for his musical score. "Visual Futurist" Syd Mead created the stunning look of BLADE RUNNER.

—Lelia Loban

VICTIM (1961)

VICTIM was a groundbreaking moment in gay cinema and the British gay rights movement, as well as being an effective, noirish thriller. While VICTIM's main plot device—criminalized homosexual behavior giving a free pass to blackmailers—has been rendered obsolete by social change, the larger theme broached, of sacrificing a safe closeted life to defy bigotry, remains a potent message today.

The film opens as its first "victim," Jack Barrett (Peter McEnery), is tracked down and apprehended by the police for embezzling funds. Detective Inspector Harris (John Barrie) suspects the reason for Barrett's theft is to pay off blackmailers who have a photo of him with another man. Harris wants Barrett's cooperation to get the blackmailers behind bars. However, Barrett hangs himself rather than betray the man involved—barnster Melville Farr (Dirk Bogarde). Farr had rejected the boy's plea for help, thinking it was Barrett trying to blackmail him. After he learns that Barrett committed suicide trying to protect him, Farr's guilt over the needless destruction of a gentle youth breaks his need to conform to social norms. Farr decides to track down the blackmailers, knowing full well that to succeed will reveal his secret to the world.

SCARLET STREET

Farr informs his wife, Laura (Sylvia Sims), of his decision, giving her the option to leave before the scandal breaks. (She knew of his homosexuality before their wedding.) Enlisting the aid of Barrett's best friend, Eddy (Donald Churchill), Farr locates some other victims of the blackmail ring (including Dennis Price as a stage star) and eventually is able to contact the blackmailers. At this point, Farr cooperates with the rather sympathetic Harris. They apprehend the ringleader, seemingly kindly book-store clerk Miss Benham (Margaret Diamond), actually a self-righteous bitch who'd be welcomed by today's religious right. In fact the rants of today's antigay bigots today are almost identical, word for word, to the venom spewed by the bigots in VICTIM.

VICTIM succeeds as both tense thriller and moving social commentary. Farr is very much the classic *noir* protagonist—a wronged man descending into a seedy criminal underworld preying upon people whose very nature is considered a crime. Farr's efforts to expose those exploiting victims of puritanical laws is his only hope to redeem not just his tortured soul, but the likes of Barrett who don't have the benefit, as he does, of power, money, and influence to shield themselves from a cruel, conformist society.

VICTIM's screenplay, by Janet Green and John McCormick, is a masterful condemnation of destructive laws, tackling the subject in a bold, frank manner quite unlike any other British film of the period. It would be years before any major American film would tackle the subject of homosexuality in such a sympathetic light, let alone one with an uncompromising plea for not just tolerance, but acceptance. Basil Deardon's candid and non-exploitative direction highlights the key element of the film—Dirk Bogarde's sensitive and heroic performance. It is unlikely that, even today, such a major gay film star as Bogarde—closeted or not—would even consider such a role. It's also arguable that a straight actor could invest the role with as much intensity and depth as Bogarde achieves. He unflinchingly draws on his own inner pain and several scenes are emotionally devastating as a result. VICTIM is an essential film that no fan of *noir* or gay cinema should miss.

—Ron Morgan

FORCE OF EVIL (1948)

Abraham Polonsky's bitter *noir* classic FORCE OF EVIL still seethes, its critiques as pointed today as they were in 1948. John Garfield stars as Joe Morse, a lawyer for ruthless crime boss Tucker (Roy Roberts), who plans to consolidate the city's numbers racket into a massive criminal syndicate with him at its profit-taking head. (The generic title FORCE OF EVIL was a compromise, when the Production Code forbade the use of the term "numbers racket" in the title.) Threatened by a

get-tough-on-crime prosecutor, Morse persuades Tucker not to use gun violence to achieve his aims but rather to embark on a scam: arrange the number 776 to hit on Independence Day, bankrupting the small bookmakers. They can then swoop in to finance those they want to take into their fold, leaving the others to rot.

The problem is, Joe's older brother, Leo (Thomas Gomez), runs one of those small shops doomed by the 776 trap. Joe's efforts to insulate his brother, to protect him from the ugliness of the gangster takeover, only serve to further endanger everyone's lives and plans. In the twisted moral geography of Polonsky's film, acts of compassion, altruism, and selflessness always backfire. In this doomed world, self-destruction is the only destiny.

The corruption and greed of gangster life is pervasive. Everyone in the film is tainted by crime; at no point do we meet a character uninvolved in the numbers racket. Even the virginal young thing played by Beatrice Pearson (her screen debut), who looks like the girl next door, is repeatedly arrested in police raids as the film proceeds. Leo Morse is the closest thing to a genuine, "honest" businessman, but his business is an illegal swindle. Joe Morse tries to delude himself that he's an upstanding lawyer, untouched by the corruption of his employer, but by the film's end he can no longer avert his eyes from the foulness of his own soul.

But this is not a mere exercise in indicting organized crime. The absence of noncriminal characters is telling, as is a stray line of dialogue: "Whaddaya mean gangsters? This is business!" To Polonsky, a Marxist whose politics got him blacklisted, FORCE OF EVIL is an allegory that links capitalism with organized crime. The numbers racket syndicate Tucker creates, and its effect on independent bookmakers, is no different than the chainification of America, as Wal-marts trample mom-'n'-pop drug stores and fast food franchises bankrupt independent restaurateurs. Leo is any small businessman trapped under the heel of a powerful corporate predator, his employees treated like bargaining chips rather than human beings. This system, Tucker's system, has no room for a conscience. That is why the fitful bursts of morality that plague the Morse brothers cause such havoc—the flaw is not in their social values (if only they had more of those values!), but in the economic structure that depends on amorality to function.

All this at a time when Ayn Rand was publishing the *Screen Guide for Americans*, full of advice such as "Don't Smear Industrialists" and "Don't Smear the Free Enterprise System." Polonsky bravely kicks against those pricks, and does so with astonishing poetry. Between the rhythmic, stylized dialogue and the gloriously off-kilter visuals, FORCE OF EVIL is a unique work of art.

—David Kalat

SCREEN AND SCREEN AGAIN

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for a marked overuse of the zoom. Whenever there are facial reactions to plot twists and tensions, the camera annoyingly isolates a given character's face, creating the formal equivalent of an exclamation mark.

Paramount's DVD features a vibrant widescreen transfer. Sound is a fine but unimpressive mono track, with English subtitles optional. There are no extras. Though at times tired and uninspired, THE ASSASSINATION BUREAU is a likeable film of comedic espionage that has long flown under the radar.

—Kevin Flanagan

THE MUNSTERS (Season One)

Universal Home Video—\$59.98

From Universal, the studio that gave us DRACULA (1931) FRANKENSTEIN (1931), THE MUMMY (1932), and THE WOLF MAN (1941), comes—for your viewing pleasure—the complete first season of THE MUNSTERS. First aired in 1964, the series concerned a loving family whose members all seemed remarkably like certain famous monsters of filmland.

The set includes the never seen on TV color pilot that was presented to CBS to pitch the series. Its cast includes Joan Marshall as Phoebe Munster (very much a Vampire takeoff) and Happy Herman as werewolf son Eddie. Fred Gwynne (Herman), Al Lewis (Grampa), and Beverly Owen (Marilyn) also appear in the pilot and went on to do the series. Phoebe was replaced by Yvonne De Carlo's Lilly Munster and the role of Eddie was taken over by Butch Patrick. Owen continued in her role, but was replaced by Pat Priest in season two.

The three-disc set is presented in full frame 1.33:1, with a total running time of 16 hours and six minutes. Subtitles are in Spanish and French. All 38 episodes have been remastered to enhance video and audio appearance and are as spiffy as when the series—and Herman—was first created.

—Dan Clayton

THE BLUE LAGOON

RETURN TO THE BLUE LAGOON

Columbia TriStar Home Entertainment—\$19.98

Kudos to Columbia for releasing this special edition, two-disc box set, featuring the classic film version of Henry de Vere Stacpoole's 1903 novel *The Blue Lagoon* and its follow-up.

In the late 19th century, two children, Richard (Glenn Kohan) and Emmeline (Elva Josephson), along with grizzled old seaman Paddy Button (a winning Leo McKern), are forced to abandon their ship bound for San Francisco when it catches fire. Drifting to a bountiful tropical isle, Paddy

teaches the children the rudiments of survival in the wild. With the passing of years, the two (now played by Christopher Atkins and Brooke Shields) naturally mature into sexual and spiritual awakening.

When THE BLUE LAGOON (1980) was originally released, critics lambasted it as being little more than pornography and bemoaned the straightforward storyline. But LAGOON was never intended to be Tolstoy; its very strength lies in its *simplicity*. This is the most beautiful paean to the vibrancy of burgeoning sexuality ever mounted, charged subject matter at any time here given a catalytic jolt by the lush surroundings of the island, a very apt evocation of The Garden of Eden. The repeated motif of monochrome Victorian photographs depicting everyday life, the castaways' only link to the larger world, provides overt contrast to their



free-spirited, color-drenched Dionysian landscape (made all the more explicit by Richard's playing of the pan pipes).

Atkins and Shields both give warm and naturalistic performances (Atkins often nude, Shields with a body double) that serve the material wonderfully. Their youth (Atkins was 17, Shields 14) further lends them a charming vulnerability. Also keep an eye and ear—out for the unmistakably voiced William Daniels, whose brief appearances bookend the film.

The success of THE BLUE LAGOON inspired a subgenre of sorts, the idealized tropical romance, but it wasn't until 1991 that the sequel arrived, with RETURN TO THE BLUE LAGOON. Here, Richard Junior (Brian Krause) and newcomer Lilli (Milla Jovovich) grow up to find wedded bliss on the same island idyll. But when a ship arrives, jealousies threaten to despoil this perfect society of two. RETURN plays like an abridged remake intermixed with light action-adventure ingredients, and the results are uneven. While the film attempts to develop the latent themes of the original, with civilization proving to be the true "savage" influence, it emerges as a mere diverting coda to its breathtaking predecessor.

The double-sided disc for THE BLUE LAGOON allows for either fullscreen

or 1.85:1 viewing pleasure. The image gives a proper breathtaking quality to cinematographer Nestor Almendros' shimmering seascapes and verdant unglades. The sequel is only available in full-screen. Supplements are agreeably plentiful for the first film, a trailer, a "making of" documentary shot in tandem with the production, photos from Brooke Shields' personal collection, and two commentary tracks. The first features director Randal Kleiser, screenwriter Daniel Day Stewart, and Shields, while the second unites Kleiser with Atkins. The participants' obvious rapport make for enjoyable listening. For RETURN, only a trailer for it and MR. DEEDS is included.

—Earl Roesel

FOREVER KNIGHT TRILOGY

Columbia TriStar Home Entertainment
Part One—\$79.95, Part Two—\$59.95

Back in 1992, CBS experimented with late night TV programming under the banner "Crimetime after Primetime," featuring several different series that barely did better in the ratings than THE PAT SAJAK SHOW, which they replaced. The shows included SWEATING BULLETS (a MAGNUM P.I. rip-off), THE EXILE (a spy show), SCENE OF THE CRIME (an anthology series) FLY BY NIGHT (an adventure show), and DARK JUSTICE (lawyer by day crime fighter on motorcycle by night). Writer James D. Parrott decided to rework his failed TV pilot movie NICK KNIGHT (1989), replaced Rick Springfield with Geraint Wyn Davies as reluctant bloodsucker Nick, and moved the production to Toronto. FOREVER KNIGHT became the sole standout series of "Crimetime After Primetime."

FOREVER KNIGHT's premise is explained in the opening monologue: "He was brought across in 1228. Preyed on humans for their blood. Now he wants to be mortal again. To repay society for his sins. To emerge from his world of darkness. From his endless, forever night." (Can anyone say ANGEL?) To repent his past 764 years and regain his soul and mortality, Knight becomes a cop working the night beat in Toronto, which he cruises in his 1962 Caddy convertible (a '59 in the Springfield version, for you trivia nuts) when he isn't flying about the city via his vampiric powers. Helping and hindering him are Dr. Natalie Lambert (Catherine Disher), who knows Knight's secret, and Detective Don Schanke (John Kapelos), who doesn't. Making undead more difficult for Nick is his vampiric "father," Lacroix (Nigel Bennett).

The show first aired from May 1992 through August 1993, when it went on hiatus. Box Set One consists of the first season's 22 episodes (including the two-part pilot, essentially a reworking of the 1989 movie) on five discs. The

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SCREEN AND SCREEN AGAIN

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transfers are clean and the sound adequate (though now the opening synth score sounds like it was done on a cheap Casio). The only extras are a few trailers. The second series ran for 26 episodes, from September 1994 until July 1995 with a retooled look, and new sets, including a new police station for the detectives. Box Set Two has audio commentaries on certain episodes from Parrot, Davies, and Bennett, and a 20-minute featurette.

I wasn't a big fan during the series' original run, but watching it on DVD has changed that. I look forward to Columbia releasing the final 22 episodes.

—Kevin G. Shinnick

GAY-THEMED FILMS OF THE SILENT ERA

Kino Video—\$29.95

Germany's Paragraph 175, like all laws penalizing homosexual activity, was in practice nothing less than a licence for blackmailers to ply their trade against honorable people. During WWII, it lead gay and lesbian people to death sentences under the Nazis and the Third Reich. But for a brief period before those dark times, censorship laws relaxed, and German filmmakers (like UFA studios) and sex researchers attempted to educate the public about same-sex attraction and relationships.

Kino Video has released three of these films on DVD—and, as it turns out, "the love that dare not speak its name" actually wasn't all that silent during the silent era.

Unfortunately, *DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS* (1919) doesn't survive intact. Kino's team of restorationists have assembled what footage there is, and using stills and descriptive intertitles, have cut together a nearly hour-long version of the film. Concert violinist Paul Korner (Conrad Veidt) is the victim of a blackmailer (Fritz Schulz). His student is unaware of his mentor's attraction for him, as is his sister, who's fallen in love with Korner. Despite the intervention of a learned sexologist (Magnus Hirschfeld, playing himself), the story ends tragically. What is remarkable is the dignity afforded the gay character; he's not a stereotype, and the script treats him sympathetically.

The luridly-titled *SEX IN CHAINS* (1928) is actually the tamest film of the three. A married couple (William Dieterle and Mary Johnson) is split apart when the husband goes to jail. Both are cruelly tested by their enforced celibacy, and both succumb to male temptation. Their mutual adulteries eventually lead them both to a bad end, of course, shocking in its injustice. What's remarkable is the sensitivity with which both man and wife are portrayed; neither is judged nor ridiculed by the filmmakers.

Finally, and best of all is *MICHAEL* (1924). What a pedigree it has—directed by Carl Theodore Dreyer, sumptuously photographed by Rudolph Mate and Karl Freund (who also appears in the movie as an art dealer), with a script co-written by Thea von Harbou. The plot is only subtly gay, in the same way that a James Whale film is subtly gay. The subtext is obvious to anyone with a three-digit IQ, though, even if it remains unmentioned. An older painter (Benjamin Christensen) becomes obsessed with Michael (Walter Slezak), looking amazingly marvelous), who sleeps around with women, "borrows" his valuables, and so on—in short, Michael's a kept boy. Like the other two movies, it doesn't end well.

Kino Video deserves high praise for these releases. While all three of these movies (especially *DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS*) show their age, they're all quite watchable. There's not a whole lot of extras on any of the discs, although *MICHAEL* has a fascinating commentary track, due to its historical importance in the Dreyer canon. Still the lack of extras is perfectly acceptable given that it's a miracle we're seeing these movies at all.

Isn't it ironic that the low-tech silent film has become more and more commonly released in the high tech digital era?

Robin Anderson

HOLLYWOOD GOTHIC REDUX

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But there was no reason for overdiagnosis after 1905, when a diagnostic test for the syphilis spirochete *treponema pallidum* was introduced. Is it credible that Stoker, himself the brother of a knighted physician, was personally attended by an incompetent doctor? Belford gives additional, if unintentional, credence to the syphilis theory with her surprising report that Dr. James Browne, the private physician who eventually certified the cause of Stoker's death, gave him arsenic treatments as early as 1910, information Stoker communicated to his brother. Arsenic, of course, had no efficacy whatsoever in treating renal diseases or the aftereffects of stroke, conditions known to have afflicted Stoker. But because of its antibiotic (e.g., poisonous) properties, arsenic, like mercury, had been used for generations as a routine, however ineffective, treatment for syphilis. Its use as late as 1910, just as Paul Ehrlich's success with an arsenic-derived "magic bullet" was beginning to be publicized, but was not widely available, could represent a last-ditch attempt to wring some value out of a time-honored nostrum.

But even if Dr. Browne was mistaken, and Stoker never had the disease, like all Victorian men they both would be nonetheless keenly aware of its terrors. *Dracula* can be read as an almost transparent syphilis parable; its images of wanton women, contaminated blood, tell-tale skin lesions and pseudoscientific "remedies" all resonate powerfully with Victorian panic about sexual contagion, the scapegoating of prostitutes, and the attendant rise of blood-purifying quack cures. Newspapers and magazines in the 1900s teemed with advertisements for doctors and tonics promising to cure "mischief in the blood" and similar euphemisms for venereal disease.

Hall Caine published an emotional eulogy in the *Telegraph* on the day of Stoker's funeral. "Of the devotion of

his wife during these last dark days, in which the whirlwind of his spirit had nothing left to it but the broken wreck of a strong man, I cannot trust myself to speak," wrote Caine. "That must always be a sacred memory to those who know what it was. If his was the genius of friendship, hers must have been the genius of love."

Ironically, the month of Stoker's death coincided with *Dracula*'s publishing rebirth. In April 1912, William Rider and Sons issued a completely reset edition, and would keep it in print for over forty years. (It was this edition's dust jacket that, appropriately, contained the striking phoenix motif.) The following year, presumably for need of money, Florence Stoker sold her husband's working notes for *Dracula* at auction, along with several manuscripts and much of his library. The notes brought very little—scarcely over two pounds sterling. In 1914, she published *Dracula's Guest*, a collection of her husband's short stories whose title piece was an abandoned episode from an early draft of *Dracula*, telling of Jonathan Harker's encounters with a female vampire and a werewolf (perhaps the Count himself?) en route to Castle Dracula. Two other collections Stoker had been preparing at the time of his death were never to be realized.

A war was brewing in Europe. The new medium of motion pictures was making remarkable strides on both sides of the Atlantic. A new age of invention and apprehension had dawned.

It would be almost a decade before the vampire would rise again to disturb the widow's sleep.



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WANT AND WEIRD VIDEOS

Deadline: August 31, 2005, for Issue 54. Basic Rate: 70 cents per word. \$15.00 minimum. Bold face and/or full caps add 40 cents per word (80 cents for both). Display ad, 2 1/4 X 2 1/4, \$70. Payment: check or money order, payable to Scarlet Street, must accompany ad. Mail to: Scarlet Street, PO Box 604, Glen Rock, NJ 07452.

WANTED: DVD or VHS of *The Wild and the Willing*, aka *Young and Willing*, 1962 British film with Ian McShane and John Hurt. Email joeamft@yahoo.com

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WANTED: physique/muscleman magazines and photographs from the 1950s and 1960s of John Hamill, Gary Conway, Richard Harrison, Glenn Corbett, and other actors. E-mail Richard Valley at reditor@aol.com

NEWS HOUND

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In the tradition of horror omnibus TV shows such as *THRILLER* and *NIGHT GALLERY*, the Showtime pay-cable channel is presenting *MASTERS OF HORROR*, an anthology series of one-hour dramas by legendary horror film directors George Romero, John Carpenter, Dario Argento, Roger Corman, Tobe Hooper, John Landis, Don Coscarelli, Stuart Gordon, and others. Frequent Stephen King collaborator Mick Garris is executive producer of the upcoming series and contributes a segment.

The Home Video Vault

Fans of classic animation can shout "zip-a-dee-doo-dah" at the news that Walt Disney's 1946 feature *SONG OF THE SOUTH* is finally on Buena Vista Home Video's schedule. A DVD release is tentatively set for the fall of 2006. This long awaited title is expected to be a special edition commemorating the movie's 60th anniversary, with extra features that examine the film's depictions of the post-slavery Old South from a historical perspective.

Professor Bernard Quatermass, in the person of Sir John Mills, confronts aliens one last time in A&E's DVD release of *QUATERMASS*, the 1978 Thames TV production available in both its original four-part miniseries version and the 240-minute feature (a.k.a. *THE QUATERMASS CONCLUSION*). Other TV series now available on disc, or soon to appear, include *THE LONE GUNMEN*, *REMINGTON STEELE*, *ENTERPRISE*, *THE PARTRIDGE FAMILY*, and a rumored rerelease of *TWIN PEAKS* Season One with the pilot episode included, as well as a Season Two set.

Stop the presses, Vincenzo! Sci-Fi Channel.com reports that Universal

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intends to release a DVD set of the one and only season of *KOLCHAK: THE NIGHT STALKER* in early October. For now, park this news in the "unsubstantiated rumor" file of the Independent News Service

The Wicked Stage

The reports of its undead are apparently exaggerated. Elton John and Bernie Taupin's stage musical *LES TAT*, based on Anne Rice's first two *Vampire Chronicles* novels *Interview with the Vampire* and *The Vampire Lestat*, is scheduled for a pre-Broadway premiere this fall at San Francisco's Curran Theatre. Robert Jess Roth, whose sole Broadway directing credit is Disney's *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*, is staging the show from a book by Linda Woolverton, who adapted Sir Elton's *THE LION KING* and *AIDA*. No casting has been announced; a staged reading in the fall of 2003 featured James Barbour as Lestat. A spring 2006 opening on the Great White Way is planned.

SHERLOCK'S LEGACY, a comedy-mystery by playwright Ed Lange, had its premiere at the New York State Theater Institute in Troy, New York in April. Lange authored of a previous Holmesian play *SHERLOCK'S SECRET LIFE*, which also premiered at the same venue in 1997. For information on this production visit www.nysti.org/sherlock.shtml or home.nycap.rr.com/bifurcated/SherlocksLegacyPage

Holy Trivia Question!

Here's a list of actors who have portrayed Batman in professional feature and broadcast productions (novelty and cameo appearances excluded): Christian Bale (2005), George Clooney (1997), Val Kilmer (1995), Michael Keaton (1989-1992), Adam West (1966), Robert Lowery (serial, 1949), and Lewis Wilson (serial 1943). Batman has been voiced in ani-

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Is *KOLCHAK: THE NIGHT STALKER* at last coming to DVD?

mated productions by Rino Romano (2004), Will Friedle (1999-2000), Kevin Conroy (1992-2001), Adam West (1977-1994), and Olan Soule (1969-1979). On radio, the Caped Crusader has been performed by Bob Sessions (U.K., 1989-1994), Matt Crowley (1945-1948), and Stacy Harris (1945).

Gone, but never to be forgotten: late-night television king Johnny Carson; TV comedian Dave Allen; comic illustrators Will Eisner, Kelly Freas, and Dale Messick; veteran Disney writer/artist Vance Gerry; playwright Arthur Miller; writers Saul Bellow, Jack L. Chalker, Frank Conroy, Clark Darlton (Walter Ernster), William Murray, Andre Norton, Susan Sontag, and Hunter S. Thompson; journalist and broadcaster Pierre Salinger; big band orchestra lead-

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NEWS HOUND

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er Artie Shaw; "Exotica" composer and bandleader Martin Denny; songwriters Jack Keller and Freddie Perren; singers June Bronhill, Danny Joe Brown, Lyn Collins, Tyrone Davis, Eduardo Guerrero Jr., Robert Merrill, Ray Peterson, and Bobby Snort, radio actor and disc jockey Phil Harper; voice actors Deem Bristow, Steve Susskind, and Stan Walt; choreographer Onna White, stuntman Mickey Caruso; animator Dan Lee; special effects artist Jack Kine; production designers John Box and Timothy Roberts, film editor Richard Best; cinematographers Erwin Hillier and C.M. Pennington-Richards, sitcom scripters Perry Grant and Paul Henning, screenwriters Dave Freeman and John Monks Jr.; documentarians Chuck Olin and Sy Wexler; producers Richard Dunlap, Debra Hill, Julian Lesser, William Sackheim, and Robin Spry; directors Larry Buchanan, Robert Dwan, Morris Engel, Greg Garrison, and Yoshi-taro Nomura, and actors Frisch Auer, Henny Backus, John Drew Barrymore, Lamont Bentley, Gabrielle Brune, Ossie Davis, Sandra Dee, Nicole DeHuff, Don Durant, Carl Esmond, Robert Fortier, Robert Gottschall, Julius Harris, James Holden, Ruth Hussey, Michael Janisch, Sheila Keith, Brian Kelly, Warren Kemmerling, David Kossoff, Lee Eun-ju, Barney Martin, Brigitte Mira, Jerry Orbach, Dan O'Herlihy, Paul A. Partain, Maria Perschy, Barbara Pilavin, Amrish Puri, John Raitt, Stan Richards, Patsy Rowlands, Debra Scott, Margaretta Scott, Ben Slack, Tony Van Bridge, John Vernon, Katherine Victor, Jacques Vil-leret, Ruth Warrick, Bunty Webb, Molly Weir, Rebecca Welles (daughter of Orson), Jonathan Welsh, Thelma White, Tina Wiseman, THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES stars Teresa Wright and Virginia Mayo, and CAT PEOPLE's captivating Simone Simon

Send The Hound your questions, comments and compliments via email to news@scarletstreet.com.

FRANKLY SCARLET

Continued from page 12

Richard: Well, I just took all my pills for the day. I bet you have a bunch you have to take, too.

Ferry: No, I just take one little pill a day. That's it.

Richard: You're lucky. I have to take one for diabetes, one for high blood pressure, and one because the doctor told me to, but I can't remember why.

Ferry: Memory pill?

Thursday, November 18, 12:19 am— Wednesday was another full day here in Karloffornia, what with meeting Pat Morison for the first time and then dining with Kasey Rogers, Bruce Kimmel, Mark Wood, and Joe Moe in the evening. Bruce has a beautiful home and we saw some hysterically funny bits from his recent show WHAT IF A MUSICAL REVUE. Also got a signed



TOP: Scarlet Street hobnobbed with Ann Robinson at Forry Ackerman's birthday bash and discussed her upcoming appearance in *WAR OF THE WORLDS* (2005). Ann, of course, starred opposite Gene Barry in the classic 1953 original from George Pal. **ABOVE:** More recently (meaning, this year), Scarlet Street took in a terrific musical review from New York's York Theatre Company. It was called UNGOLAND and chronicled the career of Kenward Elmslie, who, among many other accomplishments, furnished the lyrics for the Broadway musical version of Truman Capote's 1951 novel *The Grass Harp*. Elmslie himself appeared in the show, supported by such fine singers as Steve Routman, Lauren Shealey, Jane Bodle, Jeanne Lewhman, and Jason Dula. Broadway too expensive? Check out the fine shows at New York's York Theatre (212 935 5820).

copy of his swell new book, *Writer's Block*. Kasey was a positive delight (as always) and promises to send us some homemade macaroons for the holidays. We had a charming and delightful visit with Patricia Morison. What a great lady, and we had a surprise for her—Joe Moe's aunt was in THE KING AND I with Pat as one of the king's children and we reunited them. It's been 50 years since they saw each other. Very sweet and teary-eyed, it was...

Friday, November 19, 10:14 am Had a splendid time last night with Jack and

Carol Ann. Went to the beach for dinner and then a stroll on the Santa Monica Pier. Our evening included a brief stop at a famous "scene of the crime"—the site of Thelma Todd's death.

Saturday, November 20, 9:29 am— Yesterday I finished some research for the Rathbone/Bruce book (much more to do on my next trip) and then Tom and I were whisked by Alan Skinner to the Magic Castle for a fine dinner and tons and tons of magic acts. We spent almost seven hours there! Now it's off to Forry's party

Saturday, November 20, 5:08 pm— We're back at Forry's and still celebrating the birthday bash. Great to see Bruce, Tim, and Alan again, plus the ever caustic Curtis Harrington (spent a lot of time trading stories) Ron and Linda Chaney, Ann (WAR OF THE WORLDS) Robinson, Angus (PHANTASM) Scrimm, Bill Warren, and many others—and what a treat to finally meet Curtis Armstrong. Hit it right off and felt like I'd known him for ages. Tom and I were both very flattered that we were mentioned as being among the "celebrity" guests, and the applause was surprising and heart warming. We catch a train back to New Jersey in about 24 hours.

Wednesday, November 24, 11:30 pm— Tom and I got home about an hour ago (hours late) and we have this word of advice—never never never travel so that you arrive in New York's Penn Station on the day before Thanksgiving, unless that's the only way you can attend Forry Ackerman's birthday party and be home in time to spend the holiday with the family. Sheer madness, but we wouldn't have had it any other way. What a swell party it was, and with such swell people. Joe Moe is one of the Great Guys of Fandom; there's none better. And what a pleasure to spend quality time with Forry—taking him to lunch, joining him for a movie, going out to dinner at the House of Pies, and (of course) attending his fabulous birthday celebration.

We laughed up a storm all week. Many of the laughs were of the "you hadda be there" variety. I'll never forget that last night, when the Acker-mansion was filled to overflowing with Friends of Forry (including SS cover artist Bill Chancellor, Al Paige, John Stoskopf, and Pam Keesey). We'd all climbed into our various beds and Tom was already half asleep when I noticed the porch light still burning.

Richard: Someone left the light on in the rain.

Tom: And we'll never have that recipe again.

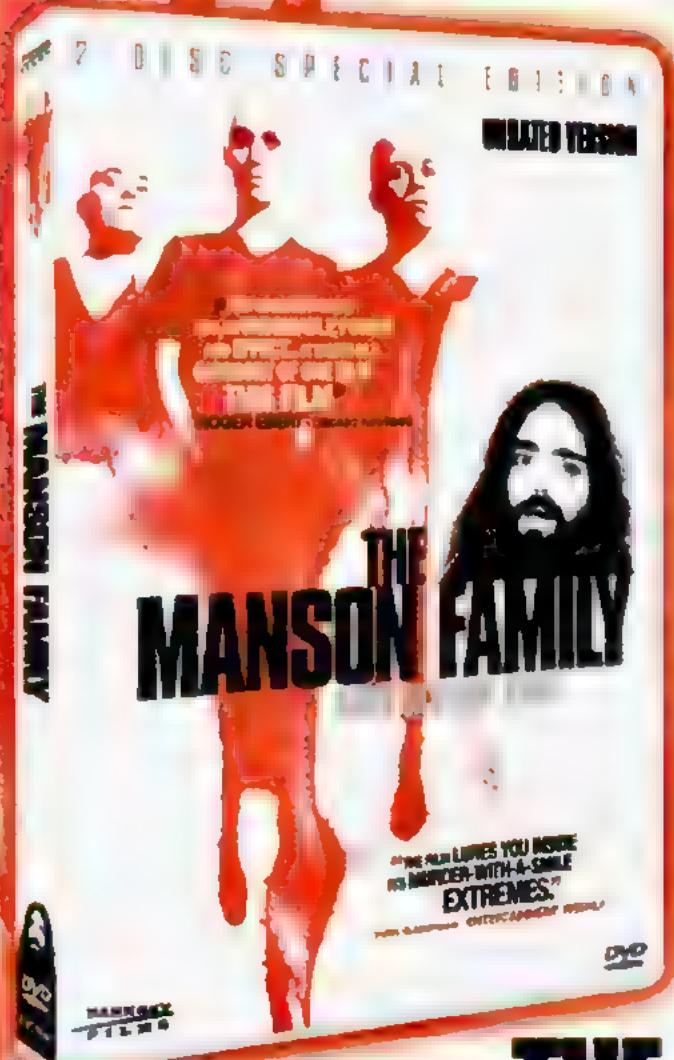
Yes, you hadda be there, but I don't care 'cause I was there. I'm here to tell you—a week spent with such warm, wonderful friends is a recipe for memories that will last a lifetime...

Richard Valley

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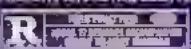
Legendary cult personalities Mary Woronov (*Death Race 2000*, *Rob Zombie's Devil's Rejects*) and Rhonda Shear (USA "Up All Night") star in this all-new sexy, shocking, and totally outrageous women-in-prison movie!

After her sister is kidnapped, a beautiful young woman must infiltrate a maximum security, all-women prison in the Philippines in order to save her sibling and other female guinea pigs from horrifying genetic experimentation carried out by a mad doctor.



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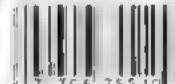
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STARRING BASIL RATHBONE AND NIGEL BRUCE

ISBN# 0-7886-0518-6



STARRING BASIL RATHBONE AND NIGEL BRUCE

Sherlock Holmes
SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE'S
*The HOUND of the
BASKERVILLES*



The most celebrated tale of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's canon, 'The Hound of the Baskervilles' is set in the Victorian Age and was originally released by Twentieth Century-Fox in 1939. It is the first of fourteen Sherlock Holmes films starring Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce.

When Sir Charles Baskerville is killed outside of Baskerville Hall, his good friend Dr. Mortimer (Lionel Atwill) fears that the curse of the Baskervilles has struck once again. Mortimer enlists the help of Sherlock Holmes (Basil Rathbone), before yet another Baskerville can succumb to the evil legend.

Sir Henry Baskerville (Richard Greene) arrives in London to claim his inheritance. Mortimer takes Sir Henry to 221b Baker Street and expresses his fear for Sir Henry's life. Baskerville soon learns that along with the grand mansion on the moor, comes a devilish curse, a curious butler (John Carradine) and a cast of bizarre neighbors.

Holmes, pressed with "other business," sends Dr. Watson (Nigel Bruce) to accompany Sir Henry to the dreary moor to protect the young Baskerville from the legend of the wicked hound. Of course, with danger afoot, Sherlock Holmes may not be so far from the scene as is assumed.

SPECIAL FEATURES:

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- Selected Theatrical Trailers
- Production Notes By Richard Valley
- Photo Gallery

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SHERLOCK
HOLMES

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE'S
*The HOUND of the
BASKERVILLES*

Sherlock Holmes
SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE'S
*The HOUND of the
BASKERVILLES*



WITH RICHARD GREENE WENDY BARRIE LIONEL ATWILL JOHN CARRADINE BARLOWE BORLAND BENYL MERCER MORTON LOWRY RALPH FORBES DARRYL F. ZANUCK IN CHARGE OF PRODUCTION ASSOCIATE PRODUCER GENE MARKEY SCREENPLAY BY ERNEST PASCAL ADAPTED FROM "THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES" BY SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE DIRECTED BY SIDNEY LANFIELD

Sherlock Holmes

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE'S
*The HOUND of the
BASKERVILLES*



WITH RICHARD GREENE, BASIL RATHBONE, WENDY BARRETT AND NIGEL BRUCE
LIONEL ATWELL, JOHN CARRADINE, BARRYMORE DONALD, DERYL WENGER
MORTON LOWRY, RALPH FORBES, BARRY L. ZANUCK IN CHARGE OF PRODUCTION
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER: GENE MARNEY SCREENPLAY BY ERNEST PASCAL
ADAPTED FROM "THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES" BY SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE
DIRECTED BY SIDNEY LANFIELD

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Sherlock Holmes

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE'S

*The HOUND of the
BASKERVILLES*



STARRING BASIL RATHBONE AND NIGEL BRUCE

Sherlock Holmes

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE'S

The HOUND of the BASKERVILLES



1. OPEN
2. MURDER AT THE BASKERVILLES
3. THE LEGEND OF THE HOUND
4. HEIR OF THE DOG
5. WHAT THE BUTLER SAW
6. THE GREAT GRIMPE MIRE
7. DESPOILER OF GRAVES
8. THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER
9. DEATH ON THE MOOR
10. FAMILY TIES
11. HIS LAST BOW-WOW
12. TRAPPED!
13. END CREDITS

"Avoid the moor in those hours of darkness when the powers of evil are exalted!" The grim warning of the family legend echoes in Sir Henry Baskerville's ears as, following the instructions of Mr. Sherlock Holmes, the baronet crosses the moor on a fog-shrouded night. Suddenly, from out of the mist bounds a gigantic, spectral hound! Fire bursts from its gaping maw, and its eyes glow with a smouldering glare! In an instant, it springs upon a screaming Sir Henry and tears at his throat!

Since THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES first leapt out of the night and onto the motion picture screen in a 1914 German production

of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 1902 novel, Sir Henry has bravely gone to the dogs well over a dozen times. Sometimes the moor is fog-riden; sometimes it's not. Occasionally the monstrous hound glows; often the budget won't permit it. Always, though, there is Sherlock Holmes arriving at the last moment, Dr. John H. Watson by his side, to save the life of his illustrious client. Amazing, as Watson might exclaim, because in 1901, when the first installment of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* appeared in *The Strand Magazine*, Sherlock Holmes was working at a distinct disadvantage.

He was dead.

Holmes' life had been threatened by his creator as early as 1891. Engaged in writing the short stories that would be collected that year in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, Conan Doyle told his mother he was thinking "of slaying Holmes in the last and winding him up for good." Mother countered with a different idea for the final tale ("The Copper Beaches") and the Great Detective was temporarily spared an untimely death. A scant 11 stories later, in 1893's *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, Sir Arthur plunged Holmes and his arch-nemesis, Professor James Moriarty, to their apparent end in the Reichenbach Falls.

Holmes remained officially dead for 10 years, until 1903's *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*. In 1901, bowing to public pressure and financial concerns, Conan Doyle wrote

DR. MORTIMER: "THERE WAS ONE POINT WHICH I KEPT BACK FROM THE POLICE — FROM EVERYBODY. ABOUT 50 YARDS FROM WHERE SIR CHARLES FELL DEAD, WERE — FOOTPRINTS."

what was billed as "a reminiscence" of *Sherlock Holmes*. Taking place well before Holmes' fateful clash with the Napoleon of Crime, this mystery milestone was *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

Following the 1914 German film (starring Alwin Neuss as Holmes, with a screenplay by Richard Oswald, camerawork by Karl Freund, and direction by Rudolph Meinert) and several sequels and spin-offs (including 1914's *DES EINSAME HAUS*, 1915's *DAS UNHEIMLICHE ZIMMER*, 1915's *DIE SAGE VON HUND*, 1915's *DAS DUNKLE SCHLOSS*, and 1920's *DAS HAUS OHNE FENSTER*), the British Empire reclaimed its own with a 1922 Stoll production starring Eille Norwood. Norwood had starred in 15 short films derived from the Conan Doyle originals the previous year, and would make an additional 30 shorts (and another feature) through 1923. As with the German films, the period was updated to the present day. The hound's spectral glow was reportedly attained by scratching the negative — prompted, perhaps, by some spectral fleas.

Few Norwood films survive, and critical opinion is widely divided as to their merits. Nevertheless, no less an authority than Conan Doyle found the series impressive. "Norwood," he claimed, "has that rare quality which can only be described as glamour, which compels you to watch an actor even when he is doing nothing. His wonderful impersonation of Holmes has amazed me."

In 1929, it was Germany's turn again, and Richard Oswald directed the last silent version of *THE HOUND*. Silence in a year when most movies did little but talk, coupled with a poorly received interpretation of Holmes by American actor Carlyle Blackwell, marked this *HOUND* a cinematic mongrel.

England and Germany continued their Holmesian ping-pong match throughout the 1930s. Gainsborough Pictures, a British studio that had produced several films directed by Alfred Hitchcock, gave voice to the first sound *HOUND* in 1931. Again, critics found the detective poorly delineated. V. Gareth Gundrey directed Robert Rendel as a short, hefty Holmes. Champion Egmond of Send gave a glowing performance as the hound. Edgar Wallace, England's leading exponent of mystery thrillers, provided the film's dialogue.

Sherlock Holmes has always had fans in high places. Franklin Delano Roosevelt was a devotee and a member of the Baker Street Irregulars, and a print of 1937's German *HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES* was found in the possession of private collector Adolph Hitler. This last German version had Bruno Guttner as Holmes. If he failed to find immortality in the role, it may be due to the fact that he was followed by the most famous Sherlock of all: Basil Rathbone.

Born in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 1892, Philip St. John Basil Rathbone began his acting career touring with the British repertory companies of his cousin, Sir Frank

SHERLOCK HOLMES: "A MAN'S OR A WOMAN'S?"

DR. MORTIMER: "MR. HOLMES, THEY WERE THE FOOTPRINTS OF A GIGANTIC HOUND!"

—THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES

Benson. In 1921, Rathbone made his British film debut in *INNOCENT AND THE FRUITFUL VINE*. In 1924, he made his first American movie, *TROPPING WITH ELLEN*. In the 1930s, Rathbone solidified his reputation as a combination leading man/villain with such roles as Philo Vance in *THE BISHOP MURDER CASE* (1930), Mr. Murdstone in *DAVID COPPERFIELD* (1935), Captain Levasseur in *CAPTAIN BLOOD* (1935), Tybalt in *ROMEO AND JULIET* (1936), and Guy of Gisbourne in *THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD* (1938).

Forever inclined to disassociate himself from horror films, Rathbone's 1962 autobiography *In and Out of Character* points with pride to his historical role as Richard III in 1939's *TOWER OF LONDON* — remembered today mainly for its universal shudders, including Boris Karloff as Mord the Executioner and Vincent Price as the doomed Duke of Clarence — but ignores the concurrent *SON OF FRANKENSTEIN*, by far the better picture. (The actor was reunited with Karloff and Price in 1964's *THE COMEDY OF TERRORS* and, when asked by this writer if he had enjoyed the experience, issued a curt "No!" and quickly changed the subject.)

Rathbone had something of the same love/hate relationship with Sherlock Holmes, and wrote: "Had I made but the one Holmes picture, my first, *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES*, I should probably not be as well known as I am today. But within myself, as an artist, I should have been well content."

Hollywood (as opposed to Baskerville) legend has it that Twentieth Century-Fox mogul Darryl F. Zanuck bumped into Basil Rathbone at a cocktail party and suggested that the actor would be ideal casting as Sherlock Holmes. A variation on the story has writer/producer Gene Markey, attending a party at which Rathbone was not present, suggesting both Rathbone and character actor Nigel Bruce (as Watson) to a highly receptive Zanuck. In either event, before Hollywood's Golden Year of 1939 had gone with the wind, Fox would star Rathbone and Bruce in *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES* and *THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES*. Twelve Universal films (plus a cameo spot in Olsen and Johnson's 1943 madcap musical, *CRAZY HOUSE*) would follow when the series moved to that studio in 1942, but the Fox films mark the only time Rathbone's Holmes appears on the screen in the proper Victorian setting. *THE HOUND* also marks the single instance of a Rathbone/Bruce Holmes film being directly adapted from — and not merely inspired by — a Conan Doyle original.

An inherent difficulty in any reasonably faithful adaptation of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is the absence of Sherlock Holmes from nearly a third of the story. The Great Detective vanishes from the onstage action at the close of the book's fifth chapter and, but for the brief sighting of a "mystery man" on the moor, doesn't reappear until the closing lines of Chapter 11. As a

THE HOUND OF

consequence, an especially strong Watson is needed to carry the action. Fox's 1939 production benefits greatly from the presence of Nigel Bruce in his first appearance as the beloved Baker Street physician.

Born in Ensenada, Mexico, in 1895 — and a surprising three years younger than Rathbone — William Nigel Bruce had a solid background of West End and Broadway stage appearances when he made his British film debut in *RED ACES* (1929). He graced seven films in his first year in Hollywood (*COMING-OUT PARTY*, *STAND UP AND CHEER*, *MURDER IN TRINIDAD*, *TREASURE ISLAND*, *THE LADY IS WILLING*, *SPRINGTIME FOR HENRY*, and *THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL*), and played supporting roles in such memorable pictures as *BECKY SHARP* (1935), *SHE* (1935), *THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE* (1936), and *KIDNAPPED* (1938) before signing on as Watson. Bruce starred in the entire film series. In addition, he appeared with Rathbone on the Sherlock Holmes radio shows from 1939 through 1946, bumbling his way through an impressive 213 episodes (including a six-part adaptation of *The Hound*). After Rathbone jumped ship, he continued with Tom Conway as Holmes for an additional 39 programs.

Holmes addicts have sometimes had a problem with Bruce's interpretation of the good doctor. A past master at British blunder and bluster, Bruce played the role in sharp comedic contrast to Rathbone's serious

(though sometimes sardonic) demeanor. A close look at his performance in *THE HOUND*, though, proves Bruce more than capable — had he been given the chance — of playing Watson as originally conceived by Conan Doyle. It is Ernest Pascal's screenplay (as well as the one written by Edwin Blum and William A. Drake for *THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES*) that firmly establishes the character as a bit of a boob. Bruce plays his scenes without Rathbone perfectly straight, but Pascal diminishes the doctor's intellect by simplifying his written reports to Holmes and otherwise overstressing Watson's role as unobservant observer. (In fairness, Conan Doyle should share some of the blame. It's in *The Hound*, after all, that he has Watson reconstruct the owner of a walking stick by the evidence of the stick itself, and it's Conan Doyle who has him get every deduction wrong.) To a certain extent, Pascal tries to make up for dumbing down the doctor by letting Watson alone notice that a crippled peddler limps first on his left leg and then on his right, but the die was cast — Watson, along with Inspector Lestrade (Dennis Hoey) in the Universal entries, served as comic relief for the remainder of the series.

Nevertheless, it's a winning portrayal, and Bruce remains to this day the popular image of Dr. Watson — to the public at large, if not to purists. Watson aside, purists find little to complain about in 20th Century Fox's *THE HOUND OF*

THE BASKERVILLES

THE BASKERVILLES. It's well directed by Sidney Lanfield. The cast, including Richard Greene as Sir Henry, Wendy Barrie as Beryl Stapleton, Lionel Atwill as Dr. Mortimer, John Carradine as Barryman (Barrymore in the novel, and changed for obvious reasons), and Morton Lowry as Jack Stapleton, couldn't be better — though Rathbone and Bruce surely deserve better than to be billed second and fourth, respectively. Ernest Pascal's script, for all its considerable changes and eliminations, remains the most faithful of the big-screen adaptations of the story. (If it's not always faithful to the letter of Conan Doyle's novel, its spirit is willing and true.) Writing in *The New York Times*, Frank Nugent thought

"the film succeeds rather well in reproducing Sir Arthur's macabre detective story." The Fox film was such a hit that almost two decades would pass before another company (England's Hammer Films) would attempt a *HOUND* — this after the previous quarter century had conjured up no less than five incarnations of the spectral beast.

For the legion of Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce fans, this is where it all began . . .

—Richard Valley is the publisher of Scarlet Street magazine (www.scarletstreet.com) and also a playwright whose comedies have been produced in New York, Boston, Minneapolis, and other cities.



